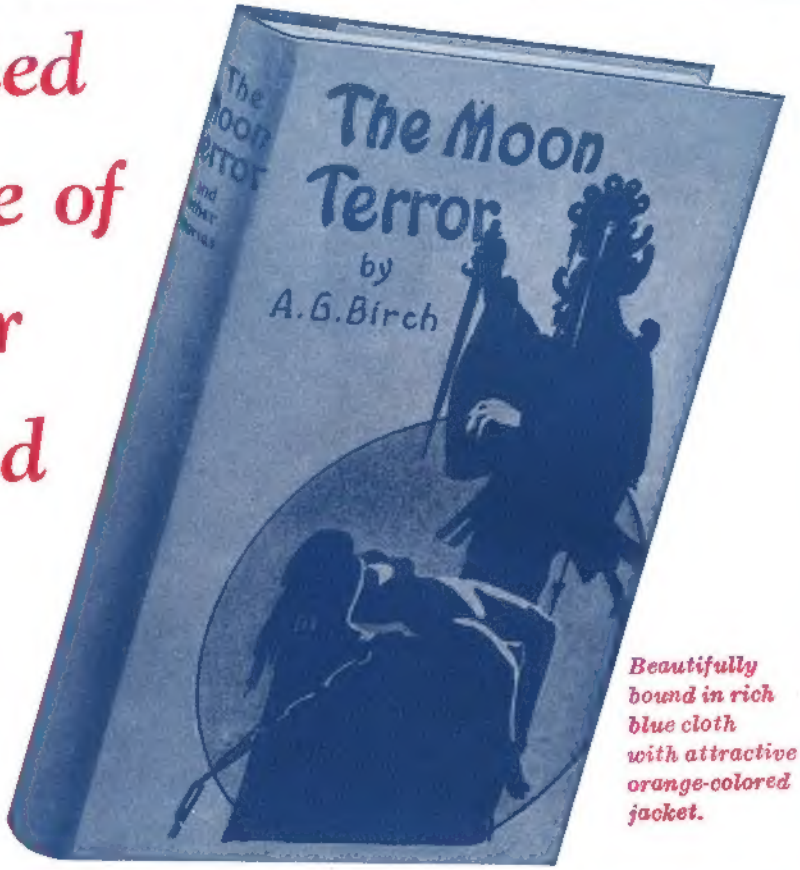
Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine

Edmond Hamilton — H. Warner Munn — B. Wallis
Adolphe de Castro — Frank Owen — and Others

Published Because of Popular Demand



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WE have been swamped with letters from our readers requesting us to reprint THE MOON TERROR, by A. G. Birch. This story appeared as a serial in the early issues of WEIRD TALES and is too long for us to republish in our magazine consistent with our policy. As a matter of service to the multitude of readers who have requested us to reprint this story, we have had it printed in cloth-bound book form. It is for sale at the leading book stores for $1.50 per copy.

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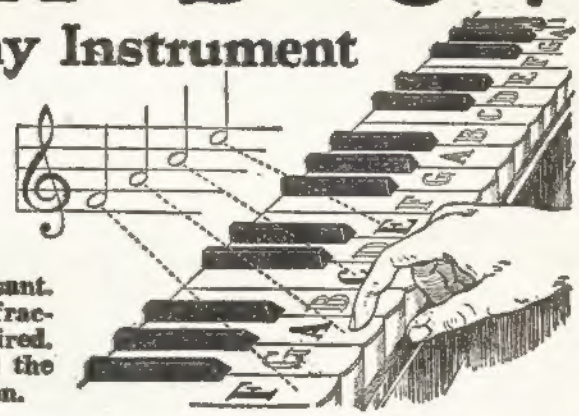

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Weird Tales

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XII NUMBER 5

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"WEIRD TALES has gained its great popularity," a friend told us recently, "because it offers us escape from the commonplaceness of the matter-of-fact world about us. I read it because it opens a new door for my imagination, and lets me roam for a few hours in another world —like Alfred Noyes' *Old Gray Squirrel,* the shipping-clerk who sat on a high stool totting up figures all day long, yet sailed on marvelous adventures, in his fancy, to all parts of the world in the argosies whose cargoes he inventoried; or like the Chinese laundryman in Vachel Lindsay's poem, who sweated at his work all day but heard the Chinese nightingale in his dreams."

Writes Charles M. Stephens, from Long Island: "The improvement in WEIRD TALES is steady and sure. I know for a fact that when once WEIRD TALES is read by a lover of gripping fiction, it is read always. Throughout Long Island the readers snap up the copies on the date they are placed on the news stands, and through the old readers here the magazine is constantly gaining new ones. Long ago WEIRD TALES passed the experimental stage in publishing, and I am happy to see it today an institution in the magazine field."

George Merrick Cobb, of Santa Barbara, California, writes to The Eyrie: "Please, oh please, give us some more stories by Donald Wandrei. His *The Red Brain* was absolutely the sublimest thing of its kind I have ever read, and I can assure you that I am well and widely read. I also must say a word about *The Moon Terror,* the serial from WEIRD TALES which you have brought out as a book. If I knew that I could never get another copy of this magnificent book I would not sell mine for ten dollars."

"I liked the Russian flogging tale *(The Justice of the Czar)* in your last number," writes Lieutenant C. T. Lanham from the Canal Zone. "Why not more dealing with the rack, the boot, the drop, the wheel, the hot pincers, etc.? The Chinese have some lovely little devices, too."

Writes P. S. Miller, of Scotia, New York: "As one of your younger and newer readers, I can not judge WEIRD TALES as well as if I were one of your pioneers. As a steady reader, I began with Edmond Hamilton's *The Metal Giants,* but before that I had read some scattered issues, one of them contain-

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I Pay Men $40 A DAY!

S. W. Allen of California made $40.80 in one day's "joyful work!" Charlie Horstman walked off with 53 orders in 8 hours! Hundreds of other men are reporting amazing incomes—many of them doubling and tripling their former salaries. And no wonder!

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The Mystery *in* Acatlan

by Rachael · Marshall · and · Maverick · Terrell ·

"It was a long and bitter fight."

IT WAS in the Explorers' Club that I first noticed the expression in Harvey Larrison's eyes when Anthony's dog came in. Larrison did not move; there was a barely perceptible pause between the puffs of his pipe; yet for a moment, before he could clamp down on his nerves, fear looked out of them—stark, staring fear, almost instantly controlled. The dog was an unusually handsome one and he went the rounds of us seeking pats and praise and getting them, including Larrison's. No one else had noticed the betraying flash in Larrison's eyes. Had it been in anyone else it would not have been so noticeable, but Harvey Larrison had a reputation for daredeviltry unequaled even in our Explorers' Club, whose members are never what one might call cautious people. I began to remember tales about Larrison, even an unpleasant hint since his return from his last trip somewhere on the ends of the earth.

"Thought you liked dogs," I said later in the evening when Anthony and his dog had left.

Larrison eyed me with surprize.

"I do," he said. "I have always been extremely fond of them, all kinds. In fact I see very little difference between them and man, except that caused by a few eons' difference in evolution."

"You looked at Ted's dog queerly," I persisted. He did not deny it.

"I had a curious experience once," he said. "It has made me feel different about dogs."

I had had the luck to catch him in the mood, to get him started on the

story which would explain that curious flash.

"It was in Acatlan it happened," he said slowly. "A terrible country, Acatlan, enormous, savage, half a million years behind the rest of the world. Anything could happen there."

"Seems that way," said Dr. McGonigal from out the shadows beside the great library fireplace where we were gathered against the harshness of a cold and stormy night.

"Yes, you've been there too, haven't you?" Larrison said.

"Three years," said the big Scotch doctor laconically.

"Anything might happen there, in Acatlan," repeated Larrison. "I have never explained this thing. There is no explanation," he continued, "except one, and that, of course, is ridiculous, impossible. Or is it, in Acatlan?"

He looked over at the doctor, who merely crossed his legs anew and muttered something unintelligible into his pipe.

"I was lounging in the railroad pueblo of Cuernavaca," continued Larrison, "waiting for my man Pablo to turn up with a wheel part which I had ordered rushed out by express. It was too hot to go down to the station, even at 10 o'clock in the morning, so I sat under an awning eating Cordovan pineapple. There is nothing in all the world so pleasant to eat as Cordovan pineapple. They grow ripe on the plant, and one cuts them in two and eats them with a spoon—sweet, ice-cold and fragrant as a field of flowers.

"There was the usual crowd hanging about, or passing to and fro: water carriers, *leche camada* venders, blue Indians—so called because of the blue blankets they weave and which constitute their sole costume, a piece cut off the end for a girdle, a hole in the middle to put their heads through and the piece out of the hole tied niftily on their heads for a hat—white-clad peons, naked children, a woman or two in the usual soiled chemise pounding corn for *tortillas;* white adobe glaring in the sun, blue shadows, and unbelievable greens, and somewhere in the distance the interminable music of a danza played on strings that seemed to drip with melody. Above the village towered the frowning vastness of the mountains. Strange tales are told of those mountains. Dunsany must have had some such tremendous ravines and mist-curtained valleys in mind when he wrote of 'the gods who dwell in the folds of the hills.' It is impossible to look up to those mountains and not feel awe, reverence, even a little cold fear along one's spine. They seem to be guarding with utter indifference and relentlessness the last withdrawing place of ancient gods dealing in ancient and sometimes terrible laws.

"Along the sun-checkered, cobbled street I saw a dog coming. It passed quite close to me and suddenly turned and gazed at me with its brown, unhappy eyes. That is what first attracted me to the dog: its unhappy, beseeching eyes, bewildered with pain and fear and yet holding somehow to a dumb, blind hope. I like dogs, even Mexican ones, which is the very limit of affection. And because the dog seemed so miserable I smiled at it, as one would smile at a person; an unusual thing to do, I admit, but I smiled in response to those eyes, seeking so desperately for a friend.

"The dog hesitated and looked back over its shoulder. It was a slender little beast, hardly more than a puppy, dark and smooth of coat. Just above one corner of its mouth was a scar—a small, deep wound which had healed but which drew the mouth up into an odd, whimsical quirk. As it came over in answer to my invitation I saw that its back, beneath the soft coat, was welted across and across with scars of the lash. Then all of a sudden as I patted it, swearing to myself at the brute who

had tortured it, such a look of utter fear leaped into its eyes as I do not like to think of. It moved its muzzle sideways, as though looking desperately for a way of escape, then again it turned to me. I threw over the dog the rubber poncho which I had folded over my arm, to conceal it from whatever or whoever it was it feared, and turned to see what the dog had seen.

"He came out of the only restaurant—a fat, sleek man with black drooping mustaches over a hard mouth. His shirt was open half-way down his hairy chest, and his velvet pants were trimmed with rows of silver buttons, and a gay *serape* hung over his shoulder. I recognized the marks of Mexican wealth; some *ranchero* probably, or a robber from the hills. He sauntered complacently by, picking his teeth, and cast a lackluster eye in my direction. Evidently seeing nothing to interest him, he passed on down the street and around the corner.

"Unconsciously I heaved a sigh of relief when he was out of sight; I hardly know why, unless it was because he was one of those persons whom one instantly dislikes. However, then Pablo cantered up with the wheel part strapped behind his saddle-bags," Larrison continued, "and I mounted and followed him, the little dog trotting along beside me.

"I WAS working on the railroad some thirty miles from the town, and it was late afternoon when we arrived at the camp.

"I went to my house, changed my clothes and went on up to the office, which was at the camp proper, a half-mile away. I forgot all about the little dog, which I had left asleep on a rug in my rooms. Work had piled up in my absence and I stayed at my desk until nearly 11 that night. Then I knocked off work, and decided to have a bite and turn in.

"I had inherited a pretty decent place from the engineer who had preceded me, and left on account of his health. It was a rambling old hacienda, long since deserted. He had only furnished one end of it, a high-ceilinged living-room with a tiled floor, a bedroom and a kitchen. He had had a fireplace built in of stone and adobe, for the evening chill pours down from the mountains like so much water. A fire was burning as I entered, and the room looked unusually attractive, almost homelike; I had accumulated a lot of blankets and Indian stuff and had some books sent out to me, and these had been dusted and rearranged. I supposed McCormack had dropped in, though I had not heard him mention any such intentions, and had made himself comfortable. Someone was sitting in the big armchair and moved in answer to my greeting but made no reply. I glanced at the chair and nearly dropped in my tracks, for there sat a girl, a young thing, hardly more than a child, staring at me with big, frightened brown eyes. I don't know exactly why, but I thought instantly of the dog, and looked for him where I had left him asleep on the hearth-rug. He wasn't there.

"'Hello,' I said to the girl, as casually as I could, 'where did you come from?'

"She said nothing, but got slowly to her feet; rather bewildered and half frightened she seemed.

"'You—you live here?' she asked in a very pure, upper-class Spanish.

"'That was my impression,' I replied.

"A moment more she stared at me—a long, somber look that seemed to be trying to read my inmost depths, and then she smiled.

"'I very glad,' she said, this time in halting English. 'I make fire for you.' The light struck full on her as she came forward, and I was amazed at her gentle, delicate beauty,

more that of a child than of a woman. Oddly enough a small scar drew up one corner of her mouth into a whimsical sort of twist.

"She took my hat from my hands and hung it up; she drew the chair toward the fire; then went and got my slippers from where I had left them under the table and set them by the fire.

" 'If you will seet down,' she said timidly, 'I will take off the shoe. Then I weel make the coffee. I make ver' good coffee.'

"I sat down because I didn't know what else to do, but she seemed to take the situation as a matter of course.

"She took off my shoes, unlacing them deftly and quickly, and thrust my feet into the slippers. One of them had a rent in the toe.

" 'Tonight I will mend that,' she said.

" 'But look here,' I burst out, 'you can't stay here, you know!'

"She looked up at me, sitting back on her heels, and her eyes filled with tears.

" 'Please you not send me away! I be good to you! I make cook, I make fire, I mend clothes, I do every-t'ing——'

" 'Who told you I wanted a—a servant?' I asked. It seemed hard to connect the word with her delicate beauty. 'I never said such a——'

"She burst into tears and flung herself down on the rug, sobbing so that her whole frame trembled. She crept toward me along the floor and clung about my knees, sobbing. Her hair fell all about her face, and as she looked up at me, her beseeching eyes half veiled by its tangles, I again thought of the dog. Nowhere else had I seen such an expression of longing, of unreasoning despair and terror.

" 'You no send me back,' she begged. 'You no send me back—to him—he so cruel—he beat me so. No! no! you no send me back—please—please!'

"Words dissolved into sobs; her little brown hands clutched me; her tangled brown head dropped upon my knee. One shoulder of the loose garment she wore slipped back and down, and I saw across her back innumerable scars of the lash.

"Pity engulfed me, even while, for some undefined reason, a little cold chill ran down my spine. Gently I put my hands about her and lifted her up. She seemed such a child, a helpless, frightened child to whom someone had been unbelievably cruel, even for that land of cruelty. She collapsed on my lap and buried her face on my shoulder, her slender little body so racked with sobbing that it seemed almost as if it might break under the violence of her grief. I soothed her the best way I could; though it's little enough I know about children.

" 'Don't be afraid, *pobrecita,*' I said. 'I won't send you back if you don't want to go. No one is going to hurt you any more.'

"Instantly her sobs stopped and her eyes smiled up at me, all wet with tears.

" 'I know you are good,' she said. 'I know I make no mistake. I weel repay you. I weel work for you.' Her instant faith was overwhelming.

"While I sat wondering how on earth I was going to get out of the position in which I had just put myself, she slipped away and went into the kitchen. Soon she returned and drew up the small table near the fire and served me a deliciously cooked meal, which she must have had already prepared and keeping hot, and fragrant, perfectly made coffee. But to all questions as to who she was and where she came from she returned one answer.

" 'But I do not know, *Señor.* I am here. It has always been like that.'

"When she was questioned closer,

a bewildered look came into her eyes and she seemed frightened. I saw that she really did not know who she was, other than that the man to whom she referred occasionally called her Chulita, when he didn't happen to be swearing at her. From her references to him I believed him to be her father. She said he was fat and had big black mustaches. There were many blanks in her story, and always she spoke of 'that night,' or 'the night when.' It was a week before I discovered that she had never seen daylight, and did not know that the world ever looked other than dark, or moonlit. She supplied all lapses by saying, 'It must have been while I sleep.' It seemed she slept during the daytime, or entered some sort of comatose state of which she retained no slightest memory. Otherwise she seemed perfectly normal."

"Ay!" muttered the doctor, looking more than he said. Our guest went right on with his strange tale.

"I was in a quandary," Larrison said. "What on earth could I do with her? To be sure, she was 'only a Mexican,' but youth and beauty and a child's delicate innocence, such as seemed to be hers, must be shielded regardless of such matters as nationalities.

"There was not a woman in the camp, and only one other white man besides myself — McCormack, who sometimes tramped up from the camp to spend the night with me over Scotch and soda and cigars and memories of 'back home.' I was tired out from work and the long ride up from Cuernavaca, and I left the problem to the morrow and tumbled into bed and instant sleep.

"In the morning I found the room exquisitely clean and set in order, my torn slipper mended and hot food upon the fire, but of the girl there was no sign. No one was about except the little brown dog asleep upon the rug. She rose and came to me, fawning at my feet, looking up at me with brown eyes of adoration and gratitude, her mouth drawn up into a sort of one-sided smile by the scar. I patted her and pulled her ears, but somehow, in spite of myself, a suspicion of a chill ran down my back.

"However, as I plunged into the routine of work, surrounded by noise and the matter-of-factness of everyday affairs, the breath of superstition passed away. The dog followed me about the yard or lay asleep in the sun in my office. I told McCormack about the girl and he was highly amused, the more so because of my seriousness.

" 'If she followed you up from Cuernavaca it's because she likes you,' he said.

" 'But she didn't follow me up,' I expostulated. 'There was no one at all on the road.'

" 'These Indians have trails of their own,' he said. 'No white man can follow them. What the 'ell! take the goods the gods send you and forget it.'

" 'But she's so infernally young!' I exclaimed.

" 'Yeh,' said McCormack, 'better leave your watch with me. Them young, innocent kind's usually the worst. Besides, what else can you do with her away out here, anyway?'

"And what else could I do with her? Send her back to be beaten by that fat scoundrel? At least she was safe and well cared for in my big place. Besides, she might go again, as mysteriously as she came.

"Toward sunset the dog roused herself from her sunny corner by my desk and scratched at the door. I let her out, somewhat impatiently, for I wanted to finish a letter before dark. An hour or two later I called for McCormack and invited him to spend the evening with me.

"The house was lit when we arrived, and there was a savory smell of cooking in the air. Chulita was there and served us a most delicious

supper. The dog was nowhere in sight.

"'But there is no dog, *Señor,*' she said when I asked her. 'I have see no dog.'

"'I hope she hasn't got lost,' I said.

"We spent a pleasant evening, smoking and talking, while Chulita sat quietly in a corner sewing buttons on my clothes. She seemed to have only one idea—to be of service to me.

"'She's a winner,' said McCormack as he turned in beside me later. 'Some baby pup!'

"For some reason the old joke irritated me.

"SEVERAL days passed. My house was cleaned as it had never been cleaned before. My lamps were always filled, my clothes mended and washed and pressed, my supper delightfully cooked and served. In the mornings there was no sign of Chulita. I never saw her in the daytime, and whatever she did about the house she evidently did at night or in the evenings before I came home from the office. I paid her a week's wages, but she left them untouched in a jug in the kitchen. She seemed to have no other wants than to look after my welfare, and no other pay but praise for her work. In all her attitude there was never a touch of coquetry. She was a child, a happy, inconsequential child, easily hurt, easily angered, easily pleased.

"I noticed after a while that I never saw the dog in the nighttime. In fact, I never saw the dog and Chulita together. The dog always grew restless toward evening and would trot off into the woods, though I always found him asleep on the rug at home in the morning. Gradually the preposterous idea, which I had felt rather than thought, died away.

"Then one day I heard an unusual commotion in the yard and Pablo came in.

"'There is an *hombre* out there who raise hell, *Señor,*' he said. 'He say you steal his dog.'

"I told Pablo to bring him in, and he returned with the fat man I had seen in Cuernavaca. He had even more silver buttons on his velvet pants and an even more gorgeous *serape* over his shoulder, and evidently a goodly lot of *pulque* under his large belt.

"'I want my dog!' he exclaimed loudly. 'You damn t'ief, you steal my dog.'

"'Is that your dog?' I asked, pointing to the little brown animal asleep in the sun.

"A curious look lit up the Mexican's face; a shadow of fear crossed it, and greed and something else.

"'Here you!' he snapped savagely, and the dog sprang to life, quivering and terrorized.

"'Well, you can't have her,' I said. 'A man that treats a dog as you have treated that beast can't get any animal from me.'

"'But she's my dog!' began the Mexican.

"'She may have been your dog, but she's mine now,' I interrupted. 'She followed me and I've had her three weeks. Just to keep your feelings from being hurt I'll pay for her. Here.' I threw five dollars on the table.

"The Mexican's eyes blinked at the amount, but he drew himself up haughtily. 'I want no money,' he said. 'I want my dog. Come here, you.'

"The dog whined and crouched, cast me a look of entreaty, and creeping over to me laid her head against my feet. The Mexican swore and kicked at it viciously with his spurred boot. He missed the full force of the blow, but the sharp spur tore a ragged line across the dog's shoulder.

"The ensuing combat was swift and to me extremely pleasant. After the Mexican had picked himself out

of the dirt-pile in the yard in which he found himself he turned a face convulsed with rage toward me.

"'I have you arrest!' he shrieked. 'You steal my girl—I mean my dog. I have you arrest!'

"Clearly the man was drunk.

"'Go to it,' I remarked, flexing my arm. 'Plenty more medicine where yours came from. She's my dog and she stays my dog; here's your money and that's all there is to it.'

"He took himself off, grumbling and muttering threats under his breath.

"'Bad business,' said McCormack to me afterward. 'Those greasers never forget. And the damn dog isn't worth a nickel anyhow.'

"'Maybe not,' I said, 'but I like the little beast, somehow. It's so darn pathetic. And besides, it likes me.' Which after all is probably half of why most of us like dogs. We enjoy the flattery of their devotion.

"I DID not see the dog again that day, and I did not think particularly of the matter again, having company affairs upon my mind. But that night, as Chulita leaned over to serve me the *enchiladas*, her bodice slipped back from her shoulder and I saw a freshly made, jagged, red scar on her shoulder, as though a spur had struck across it. Somehow I found it difficult to finish my supper.

"Of course it was an accident, a coincidence. It was ridiculous to think anything else—worse than ridiculous. What strange notions came from staying for years up in these lonely, savage mountains! How I would laugh at myself for even dreaming remotely of such a possibility, once I was back in safe and sane, everyday New York. But insidiously the idea remained.

"Then another complication arose. I fell in love with Chulita. I tried to argue myself out of it, to reason and to shame myself out of it, without avail. I could not get home early enough, it seemed to me, to the house which was a house no longer but a home.

"As for Chulita, she, too, was changing. The haunted look left her eyes and a look of happiness succeeded it. The scars on her pretty back healed and faded. I still treated her as I would a child, a lovable and loving child, though more and more I felt toward her as toward a woman. And I thought she felt the same toward me. I surprized depths in her gaze, and once when our hands inadvertently touched I saw her tremble. I determined to marry her, and told McCormack so after one of his rude jokes which angered me.

"'Go ahead,' he said. 'Stick your head in the noose if you're determined to.'

"'Why shouldn't I marry her?' I demanded. 'She's as sweet as they come, and good, too. And she's a lady.'

"'Where did she come from? What's her name? How do you know she ain't married already? What is she, anyway?' he demanded; to all of which I replied that I didn't know and didn't care.

"'Chulita, I love you. I'm not good at fancy speeches, but will you marry me?' I asked her that night.

"She looked up at me with those great, fathomless brown eyes. 'I will do anything you want,' she replied. 'What is this, to marry?'

"'I love you,' I told her. 'I love you so much that I can't talk about it.'

"'Oh,' she sighed, resting her head against me. 'To love, I know what that is.'

"'Get ready,' I told her after a while. 'Tomorrow we will ride down to Cuernavaca and get the *padre* to

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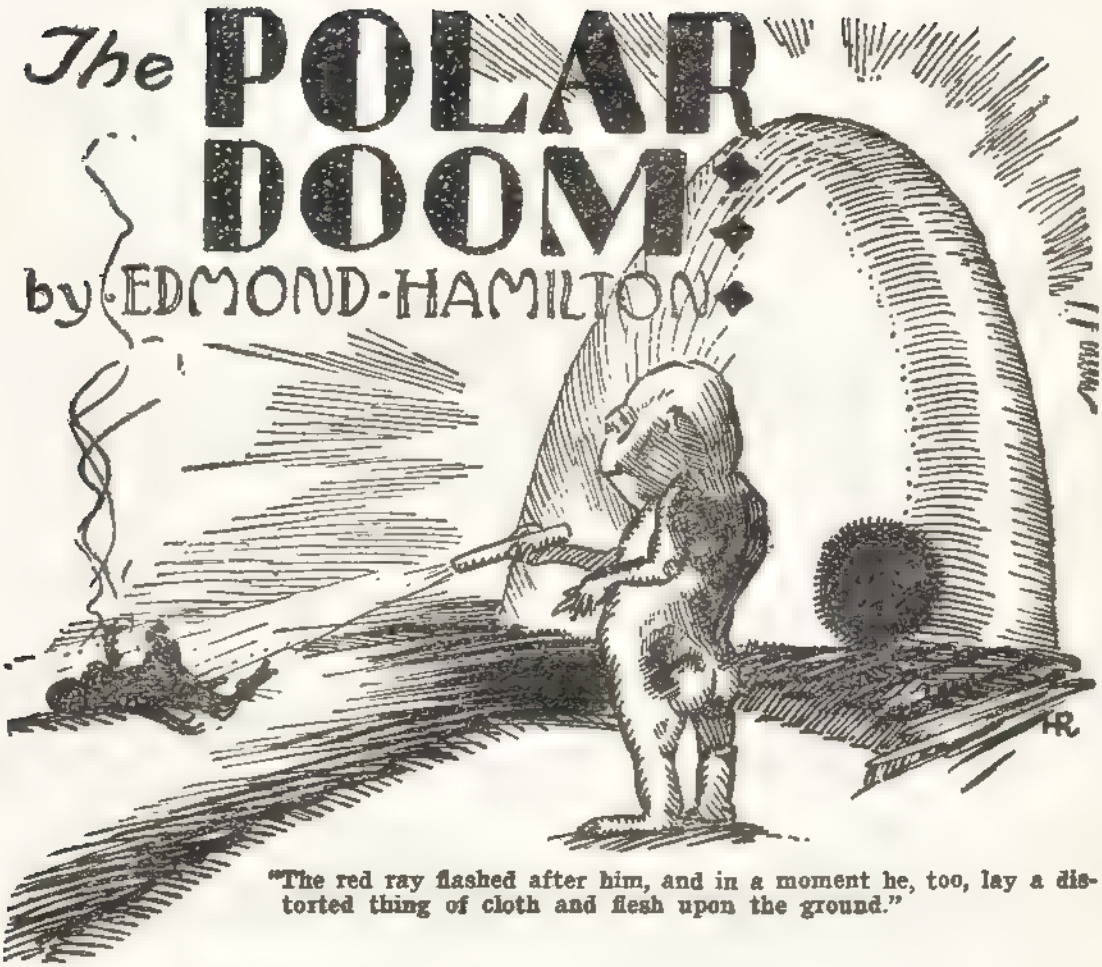
The POLAR DOOM

by EDMOND HAMILTON



"The red ray flashed after him, and in a moment he, too, lay a distorted thing of cloth and flesh upon the ground."

IT WOULD be as well, perhaps, in attempting this record of the most deadly peril that ever threatened our planet, to give first only the bare facts of the thing's beginning, as they came before the public at the time. There is information enough for our use. In the staid columns of scientific journals one finds it, and in the monographs of certain anthropological societies, and in the headlines of filed newspapers. So it is back to these that we go now, back to that first startling announcement which marked, for us, the thing's beginning.

It was early in January that the great Eastern University gave to the press the information that a scientific expedition to the Arctic was being organized, of which Dr. Angus McQuirk, the university's brilliant anthropologist, was to be the head. The expedition's objective, it was stated, would be Corson Island, one of the numerous little ice-covered bodies of land lying north of the Parry Archipelago, within several hundred miles of the pole itself. An extensive search was to be made for ruins and other traces of ancient man believed to exist there, and it was hoped that the results of that search might throw new light on the problem of man's place of origin. The announcement added that the party would leave for the north early in July, proceeding in a chartered ship up to Baffin Bay and through the Belcher Channel, and then north to the island itself.

That first announcement, brief as it was, aroused a very definite inter-

est among members of the scientific world, an interest that was derived in great part from the prominence of Dr. McQuirk, the expedition's moving spirit. For McQuirk, though but a few years over forty, was conceded to be one of the three greatest living anthropologists, and his works on the subject had become contemporary classics. A tall, lowering-browed Scotsman of dour speech and manner, he was to pupils and colleagues alike a forbidding figure, though the brilliant quality of his work was respected by all. It was only that respect, indeed, that saved his projected expedition from the attacks of his fellow scientists, since the enterprise itself was such a departure from accepted theories that it could hardly go unchallenged.

For long, it was true, there had been suggestions that some traces of man's origin or past might lie hidden in the bleak white wastes of the north, but such suggestions had been considered only as interesting fancies. For whatever remains of ancient man might exist in the Arctic, it was pointed out, were forever hidden from discovery by the great ice-fields which cover all land around the pole, extending as far south as the lower half of Greenland. Any quest for clues to man's past in those mighty frozen wastes would be a search comparable only to the proverbial needle in a haystack.

This much, indeed, was admitted by McQuirk himself, but against it he asserted that his own expedition was working on a definite lead, and would confine its efforts to the relatively small area of Corson Island. For many years a strange story had been current among the Eskimos concerning that island, a story changed and distorted as it passed from mouth to mouth but remaining at bottom the same. The core of the tale was that somewhere in the island's interior was a place where great ruins of stone and metal projected partly through the ice, ruins which the superstitious natives asserted had been erected by devils long ago. The place itself was shunned by them as a spot accursed, but more than one of their wandering hunting-parties had landed on the island and had glimpsed the ruins from a distance.

It is probable that this tale, in one form or another, had been related to most of the white explorers and traders who had ever visited that section of the Arctic, but apparently it had been rejected by all of them as a mere fabrication of native legend. One man, though, a missionary from one of the Prince Albert Land settlements, had heard the story several times and had been struck by the fact that whoever told it always placed the scene of it at the same spot: on Corson Island. Such unanimous exactitude of position seemed to him quite unusual for an Eskimo legend, and also he was aware that the interior of the icy island had never yet been explored by white men. His interest in the thing had steadily grown, and finally, through his curiosity and letters to the press, the matter had come to the attention of McQuirk himself.

To the average scientist, perhaps, the thing would have seemed flimsy enough as a ground for forming an investigating party, but to McQuirk it was the opportunity of a lifetime, the chance to realize his deepest ambition. He was a great anthropologist but he had resolved to be greatest, to solve anthropology's greatest riddle—the riddle of the birthplace of man. Year after year others had sought the answer to that enigma, and across the bleak plains of Mongolia and the fastnesses of African jungles and the scattered isles of the Pacific their expeditions had toiled and searched, and toiled and searched in vain. And such efforts would remain always in vain, McQuirk contended, since it was his belief that

the place they sought, the place of man's origin, lay hidden somewhere under the polar ice-fields of the north.

So it was that this news of strange ruins in the icy Arctic was as flame to tinder to his fanatic scientist's soul. On the strength of that news, using all his prestige and influence, he had managed to obtain backing for his expedition, which he confidently predicted would lay bare the last secrets of anthropology and throw a flood of new light on the past of the human race. So through the months that followed that first announcement the expedition's supplies and equipment were gradually assembled, and in the first week of July it took its departure from New York in the auxiliary schooner *Delight*, which had been specially chartered and fitted for the trip.

The party, when it sailed, proved to be a comparatively small one. It included, besides Dr. McQuirk, his only close relative, his sunny-haired younger brother David, who had long acted as his assistant; three archeologists and ethnologists from Eastern University's staff, Drs. Lowell, McGrath and Drivoli; and a field representative of the North American Museum named Chapman, who was to act as the expedition's radio operator. There were also three hard-bitten Canadians experienced in Arctic work who were to have charge of the new motor-sledges which would be used in penetrating the island's interior, while the ship itself was manned by New England officers and crew.

FOUR days after leaving New York the *Delight* touched at St. John's harbor, taking on the last of its supplies and then proceeding north along the Labrador coast and up Davis Strait. Daily the ship reported its position and progress by radio, but as it crept farther and farther north the calls of its powerful apparatus came fainter and fainter to the listening stations. By the time the schooner had passed through Belcher Channel and was threading its way northward through the maze of the Parry Archipelago, trouble was already being experienced in receiving its signals.

On September 4th, two months after the expedition's departure, a message from the *Delight* was received by the Canadian government station at Fort de Roche, announcing that the ship had anchored off the coast of Corson Island and that the scientific party was completing its preparations for the expedition into the interior. The motor-sledges had been tested and had worked perfectly, the message added, and a start into the island would be made soon.

Almost immediately after the reception of that message the thread of communication with the schooner was abruptly snapped, since a few hours later there burst out one of those intense electrical disturbances peculiar to the polar regions, which smothered all attempts at communication beneath an unbroken roar of static. For almost a week the static tempest raged before lessening. It was on the sixth day, when the crashing bursts were just beginning to subside, that a half-dozen Canadian stations picked up that brief, fragmentary message from the *Delight* which was to focus on the schooner the attention of most of the world.

It would be best, perhaps, to give that message verbatim, in the incoherent, static-broken condition in which it was first taken down. So it is presented hereinafter exactly as received at the time, just before midnight on the 10th, the records of it kept by the receiving stations having been collated and checked against each other.

". . . e days ago that McQuirk and our par . . . ooner's crew to help us . . . at came out of the do . . . uirk had dug up death . . . ivoli, captain, mate and all of

crew. All are dead, all dead, and I am onl . . . ying myself, God help m . . . s is a horror from . . . th . . . enth going fas . . . bye . . ."

For many hours after the reception of that broken, enigmatic message constant calls went out to the schooner in an effort to re-establish communication with it, but there was no faintest signal of response. The message itself had been at once relayed to the officials of Eastern University and had at the same time been seized upon by the newspapers, the more sensational of which headlined the matter on the following day. And through all that day, and the next, and the next, the unceasing calls of the northern stations to the schooner went quite unanswered.

By that time the matter had become a press sensation of the first importance. This was due not only to the prominence of Dr. McQuirk and his fellow scientists, but also to the mystery which surrounded the expedition's fate—mystery which had been intensified by the last, incoherent message from the *Delight*. If reliance could be placed on that message, at least part of the expedition's personnel had already perished. What mishap they had met with, though, remained a problem, and an even greater problem was whether any members of the party had managed to escape the death which had overtaken the rest.

It was the latter question, indeed, that seemed of most importance to the university officials, and through their urgings extraordinary efforts were made to re-establish communication with the ship. Constant calls were broadcast from the powerful Fort de Roche and Lac d'Or stations, while over all Canada and the northern United States professional and amateur operators alike listened intently for some signal from the *Delight*. But all such efforts proved in vain, since at the end of a week the veil of silence that screened the schooner from the world remained quite unchanged.

By that time it had become apparent to the authorities at Eastern University that there was no hope of radio communication with the ship, yet there seemed no other possible method of getting in touch with the expedition. It was impossible to send a ship to the island for investigation, for it was now well into September and already the first floes of the great polar ice-pack would be sweeping down upon the island from the north. Long before any ship could reach it the island would be hemmed in for hundreds of miles by a mighty frozen waste through which no ship in the world could force a way. Because of this it was conceded by all that nothing could be accomplished until the breaking-up of the ice in the spring.

A last chance, however, showed itself in the form of an announcement from the Canadian government, stating that one of the aviators attached to the government topographical expedition in Victoria Land had been ordered to attempt a flight to Corson Island, five hundred miles to the north. Lieutenant Warren and his plane were to start at the first favorable moment, the announcement added, and it was hoped that he might be able to combat the Arctic storms long enough to reach the island and discover the expedition's fate.

This news held little of hope, though, even for the most optimistic. For by that time almost all had come to believe that the members of the expedition and the schooner's crew had already perished. The "all are dead" phrase in the *Delight's* cryptic last message was recalled, and the general expression of opinion was that the matter might be considered a closed one, another tragic chapter in the tragic history of Arctic exploration.

Even the university officials were forced to admit the probability of this view. Reluctantly they decided that until spring, and the breaking-up of

the polar ice, nothing further could be done. The matter was already disappearing from the newspapers, by that time, passing simultaneously from the fickle public interest. Even in scientific circles the loss of the brilliant McQuirk occasioned only a few expressions of polite regret. The sensation, like all sensations of yesterday, was already all but forgotten.

Forgotten—and in street and building, factory and office, theater and school, the life of the busy world hummed on—a life, a civilization, so complex and broad-based and well ordered that it was incredible that it could ever be shaken or destroyed by any force or forces. So it must have seemed, then. Certainly none there was who guessed that even at that moment an ancient menace was rising and gathering and growing beneath which that civilization would crash like a flimsy toy. None there was who dreamed that the only warning of the coming terror that was ever to be received had been disregarded, misunderstood, and that away in the icy north the events of eons were rushing toward a climax which would mark the end forever of the age-old reign of man.

2

It seems probable now that no complete history of the coming of the terror will ever be written. The very scope and magnitude of the thing make that impossible. One could as well write a history of an earthquake, for there is no visible chain of cause and effect, no sequence of rationally connected events to be detailed. Nothing but panic, ruin, death, smiting suddenly out of the unknown and then receding into the unknown again before their nature had ever been suspected by the dazed and staggering world.

The best that can be done, indeed, is to make some attempt at picturing the thing as it appeared at the time, on that fateful evening of September 20th, when it burst first upon the world. And one begins such an attempt, inevitably, with the striking of the thing at Winnipeg, since it was there that the first blow fell.

The sources of our information concerning the attack on the northern city are unsatisfactory in the extreme, being mostly garbled and distorted accounts of terror-stricken survivors, which contradict each other at a score of points. Even seen through these conflicting stories, though, the main phases of the thing are clear enough, though some minor features of it are subjects of dispute to this day.

It seems established now that it was some few minutes past 7 o'clock when the thing first struck, just at sunset of the long September day—a sunset that flamed crimson and gold in the west, its last glowing rays falling upon the city's streets, in which the ever-moving life and traffic seemed to have lessened for a moment. The last crowds of homeward-bound workers had surged through those streets an hour before, and now there were only a few chance pedestrians hurrying toward an awaiting dinner, and a thin last trickle of automobiles hastening toward the suburbs. The evening theater rush had not yet begun, and for the moment the streets lay comparatively empty beneath the waning westward light. And it was then that there came the terror.

There was a sudden startled cry from one of the pedestrians, a cry that spread along the street like flame, that was taken up and repeated by a score of voices almost instantly. And simultaneously there was a craning of necks toward the sky, as those in the streets gazed up in response to that shout. But as they looked, they fell suddenly silent.

Sweeping above the city from the north, a score of dark, mighty shapes were speeding smoothly through the air a thousand feet above the streets—shapes that were each a score of feet

in diameter, with flat bottoms and curving sides and domed tops, resembling gigantic chocolate-drops in form. Their smooth sides glinted dully in the last afterglow from the sunken sun, and as they sailed through the air with effortless ease and speed there came down to the stunned watchers a thin, buzzing whine as of the operation of fine-running, high-powered machines.

And now, in answer to the cries of those who watched, the buildings of the city were vomiting their occupants into the streets, and as from house and office and factory they came forth they, too, looked up and saw, and shouted in wonder. The massed flying-domes were moving ever more slowly, by then, until at last they stopped, and hung motionless in the air a thousand feet above the heart of the city. And from below the thousands watched.

Until that moment there had been not the merest hint of fear in all those watching crowds, their strongest emotion being an overpowering surprize and curiosity. It was the general half-formed thought, no doubt, that these were airplanes or dirigibles of a new sort, being presented to the world in spectacular fashion, and as the dark shapes hovered above them in the graying dusk a babel of excited discussion and speculation was sweeping through the crowds who watched.

Then, abruptly, the massed domes above separated, dropped downward within a hundred feet of the city's roofs, hovering here and there in strategic positions above its streets and squares. And as they sank downward through the deepening twilight a puzzled murmur sped across the crowds below, a first vague sense of fear. There was a sudden stir of movement from beneath the dark shapes that loomed above, a backward-moving suction of the crowds from under them, a moment's uneasy silence. And then the whole tableau was cut suddenly short as death leapt down upon the city from the hovering domes above.

From each of them sudden rays of brilliant red light stabbed down toward the massed crowds below, sweeping swiftly over them and cutting across them in gigantic swaths of death. For wherever that ray passed over stupefied men and women it left behind only tiny, twisted little masses of flesh and cloth, the humans it touched shrinking instantly into those tiny heaps of dead flesh, lying silent in dreadful death. There was a single moment of terrible stillness as that death seared across the crowds, and then with a vast, composite roar of utter terror they were turning, flowing away in all directions, buffeting in mad panic through the streets while after them leapt the crimson, merciless ray.

It is only now, indeed, that we have come to appreciate, with understanding, the terrible power of that ray. The principle of it, however, we had understood long before. We knew that any matter, any object, is composed of vast numbers of tiny molecules in ceaseless motion, molecules spaced as far from each other proportionately as are the planets of our universe. Knowing this, we know, too, that if in some way the molecules of an object could be spaced closer, pressed together, jammed into a compact mass, the object which they formed would be destroyed, shrunken, compressed itself into a tiny and inconceivably dense form. And it was this very compression of molecules which the red ray accomplished, since in some way it endowed the molecules of any object it touched with a power of attracting each other, drawing closer together because of that attraction, compressing the object which they made up into a dense, shapeless fragment of its former self.

And as this compression ray swept over the fleeing crowds, every object touched by it dwindled, compressed instantly. Humans shrunk to com-

pact little masses of distorted flesh and cloth, streets furrowed deeply beneath its touch, automobiles changed to twisted little wrecks of metal. And as the brilliant rays lifted and seared along the sides of buildings there came crash upon thundering crash, as the stone and steel on those sides shrank suddenly and allowed the rest of the edifice to collapse and fall.

It had become completely dark, by then, and under the pall of that darkness the city had changed into an inferno of roaring terror, a place of fear-mad rushing crowds and panic inconceivable. Through the streets they surged and swept, while ever from above the blinding rays played on, sweeping deliberately about the city, leveling great buildings with mighty crashes that buried thousands beneath falling wreckage, sweeping through street and square in brilliant death to lick up and destroy the mobs that pressed madly through those streets.

Within ten minutes the heart of the city had become a place of unearthly ruin and death, piled with the wreckage of its buildings, choked with the distorted and shrunken dead. Over all the city lay darkness, by then, no electrics relieving it because of the severed cables, but out in the surrounding suburbs were shouts and moving lights, as the first exodus of the terror-stricken masses swirled along street and road. Over these, now, the flying-domes were speeding, flashing the red ray across them as they passed, cutting wide lanes of death across the cowering masses, passing from over the city to the great steel web-work of the railroad yards and lines, the communication center of half a continent. There the ray cut and whirled again, ripping great swaths of destruction across the clustering tracks beneath, crippling the nerve-centers of Canada's transportation system. That done, the smiting rays vanished; there was a gathering, buzzing drone as the domes massed together again; and then they were speeding away to the east, leaving the wrecked city a place of death and ruin and utter panic fear.

Because of the destruction of the telegraph lines it was many minutes, as we now know, before there went out to the world the first word of the death that had devastated Winnipeg, in the form of a halting radio-message which stated only that unknown forces of terrific power had appeared above the city and destroyed the greater part of it. Even while that first message of warning was flashing through the ether the flying-domes must have been speeding east with incredible velocity, for within a quarter-hour they had covered the eight-hundred-mile stretch between Winnipeg and Montreal, and were descending to rain death and destruction from the upper darkness upon the latter city.

It would be profitless to give here any close attention to the attacks on Montreal and Quebec. Striking at the two metropolises of the north in quick succession as they did, and before any warning could be received or understood, the two attacks were replicas of that upon Winnipeg—minutes of red terror during which the blinding rays seared down through the upper night to cut across the cities in great trails of ruin and death. And then the domes had massed again and were again speeding away, this time toward the south, their objectives, as we know now, being Boston and the city of New York.

We know, too, that by the time they started south some warning of the attack on Winnipeg and Montreal had already been broadcast, and so it was that by the time the domes reached Boston they found the city already in the throes of an intense panic, its streets already choked with the rush of fear-driven thousands. Because of this the loss of life at the Massachusetts city was far below that in the

three Canadian cities, for thousands had already made their escape by that time. The work of destruction, though, was the same at Boston as at the others, the rending rays cleaving across massed buildings and bridges and streets until the city lay a single waste of wreckage. And then again the domes had lifted and were racing still farther south, this time toward New York itself.

It is probable that the hour that preceded their coming to the Hudson-side metropolis had been the most frenzied in the great city's history. Out from east side and west, through the narrow streets and across the parks and squares, had rolled the first panic-stricken mobs, sweeping in vast waves toward the bridges eastward or toward the ferry-docks, pouring between the walls of the clifflike buildings in continuous human torrents of increasing density. And as word came in quick succession of the destruction of Montreal, and Quebec, and then of Boston, the last doubters were convinced of the death that was racing toward them, and ran out to join the swelling mobs outside. When the massed domes finally swept down upon the city from the north, bridges were jammed with tight-packed thousands, pushing blindly forward, while other thousands in the last extremities of panic had streamed toward the vehicular tunnels beneath the Hudson, since by then the crews of the ferry-boats had refused to return to the island to transport more hordes to the farther side.

During the time that had elapsed since the first warning, though, the military authorities at New York had not been idle, and had had time to make a few hasty preparations. Inconceivable as these successive attacks upon the northern cities were, in power and motive, the authorities at Manhattan yet realized that their own city would be likely to suffer next, and so even while the domes sped southward through the night, men were working madly to prepare for their coming. Some three-score of anti-aircraft pieces mounted on tractor-mounts had been stored at the navy yard in Brooklyn, and these were swiftly rushed across to the island of Manhattan, where they were distributed at strategic positions in streets and squares over the island and hastily camouflaged by covers of tarpaulins. Far out at sea, too, the North Atlantic battle-fleet was racing shoreward under forced draft, and though it could not reach the city for some hours the planes of its two great aircraft-carriers, the *Delaware* and the *Bennington*, were rising from the decks and roaring westward through the night toward the threatened city.

While these preparations went on, the millions on the island were pressing still toward its edges, forcing hundreds into the water, pushing and striking to win their way out. Behind them, as if in silent mockery, the flaring electric signs that rose above the streets were still winking on and off with insensate persistence. And high above these there swung and stabbed and circled the great beam from the giant searchlight on Governors Island. Abruptly that beam stopped, swung back, held steady. And then, over all the shouting tens of thousands beneath, there swept a sudden silence, dense, overwhelming, a silence in which all gazed up as though stricken by a very paralysis of awe and terror.

For there, two thousand feet above the city's highest pinnacle, there hung a score of dark, clustering shapes, domes of metal whose sides gleamed beneath the brilliance of the great searchlight, domes that hovered silent and motionless above the great city. And silent, motionless, the vast crowds watched.

Abruptly there burned down from one of the hovering domes a narrow shaft of dazzling light, that struck downward and swept along the river east of the island in a titanic, slicing

sweep, cutting through the three great bridges there as a knife might cut through cardboard. With a rumbling thunder that was like the crash of doom the bridges buckled and fell, collapsed into the waters below, spilling the jammed thousands upon them downward in a falling shower of tiny figures.

Over the city again was silence, now, the silence of death, and then the domes were dropping smoothly downward, lower and lower until they were within a scant five hundred feet of the city's towers. Then a rocket flared green above the city in dazzling signal, tarpaulin covers were abruptly pulled aside, and the descending domes were suddenly confronted by the muzzles of a half-hundred upward-pointing guns.

There was an instant in which the world itself seemed to hold its breath, and then red flame burst skyward from the massed guns in one tremendous burst of shattering thunder. Amid the crash of exploding shells above, six of the hovering shapes crumpled, twisted and fell, whirling blindly down into the streets below.

From the watching crowds there burst forth a tremendous shout of mad triumph, a shout that suddenly stilled, broke off, changed into a dull, crescendo roar of terror. For the domes above, staggered by that unexpected blow, yet held their ground, and from them there leapt downward a hell of crimson death, a hundred shafts of deadly rays that stabbed and seared along the streets in swift, destroying power. Before one of the guns below could fire again they lay sprawled in twisted wrecks of metal, the men around them shrunken lumps of flesh, while the wild sweep of the whirling rays sent a score of mighty towers crashing to the earth in sudden collapse and ruin.

And now, as the frenzied masses below swirled from street to street in blind effort to escape the death-trap of the island, there came a powerful droning from the east, and over the island and into the glare of the searchlights came the great seaplanes from the approaching fleet, their guns spitting lead as they drove toward the hovering metal domes.

The latter minded them hardly more than a swarm of angry flies, the bullets glancing harmlessly from their metal sides while their own rays swept the sky in brilliant destruction, sending plane after plane crumpling down toward the ground. Within fifteen minutes, more than two hundred planes had utterly perished, driving fearlessly toward the domes until the last. In an agony of expectation the masses below waited for the death from which they could not escape, but instead of sending that death down upon them the domes themselves dropped quickly toward the darkened city, toward the spots where the wrecks of their own companions had fallen, leaving only three above to circle and hover in watchful observation.

A few minutes only the shapes on the ground remained there, evidently inspecting and removing something from the wreckage of their companions, for the clatter of moving metal came through the darkness to the tense, waiting crowds, though none could glimpse through the darkness what was taking place. Then the metal shapes drove up again toward the zenith, hovering for a moment, and then sped northward, leaving the destruction of the metropolis beneath but partly accomplished. The crowds in that metropolis watched them going, breathless, hardly able to credit their own reprieve from death. Then all of them were suddenly shouting.

Out in the suburban cities, though, to north and south and west, the exodus of panic was still continuing, and from there, through radio and telegraph and telephone, the first news of the events at New York was flashing across the nation, across the world.

And that news, at once, precipitated the greatest panic which the world had ever known, a panic intensified by the mystery behind this staggering invasion. None knew who or what these invaders might be, and none knew what city they might strike at next; so within hours, from every city in the world, from Amsterdam and London and Melbourne and Buenos Aires, thousands were fleeing, pushing their way out into open country with the fear of death at their backs. And though through the passing hours there came no word of further attacks, or any news as to where the invaders had gone, the panic deepened instead of lessening.

All the forces of law were crumbling beneath the anarchy of universal fear; the organizations of centuries were swiftly disintegrating and disappearing; and over all earth men waited in expectant terror for the return of those enigmatic invaders from the unknown whose first colossal blows had already shattered the civilization of a world.

3

It is only now, looking back upon the terror with the insight born of later knowledge, that we can see upon what trivial circumstances depended the outcome of it all. Much of the working of fate's tiny cogs we can not even yet discern, no doubt, but we understand enough now to appreciate the results which were to follow from that brief order which sent young Francis Warren and his plane roaring north over the gray expanse of Melville Sound toward Corson Island.

For three months Warren, a lieutenant in the Dominion Air Force, had been attached to the government party which was mapping the bleak stretches of Victoria Land, that great, barren island which lies just north of the Canada mainland. It had been monotonous enough, his work; so when the order came to attempt a flight to the icy island northward he was eager to obey.

It was on the morning of the 20th that he made his start, some several hours before that staggering attack on Winnipeg. His little amphibian plane rolled lightly across the level ground and then lifted smoothly into the sunlight while Warren, who had elected to fly alone, waved his arm in a farewell gesture to those on the field behind him. Slanting sharply up, he turned and circled once, then sped away toward the north.

The morning was one of brilliant sunlight, and Warren, snug in his electric-heated flying-suit, whistled and sang to feel the rush of the cold, clean air against him as he fled north. He was confident that he could reach the island, if no sudden Arctic storm arose, since the tanks of his plane held sufficient fuel for almost two thousand miles of flight, while Corson Island lay less than six hundred miles to the north.

The misty brown land behind faded quickly from view as he sped north over the gray waters of the great sound, holding an even height of a mile and keeping a sharp lookout for drifting wreckage which might give some clue as to the *Delight's* fate. Nothing was to be seen, however, except occasional white bergs, forerunners of the vast polar ice-pack, drifting majestically southward like mighty floating cathedrals of ice. As he sped farther and farther to the north, the bergs beneath dotted the sea ever more thickly, until at last, by the sixth hour of his flight, he was flashing on over tremendous drifting floes which lay upon the ocean's surface like floating ivory islands.

Ahead, the redly glowing sun was dropping swiftly toward the horizon, marking the end of the brief Arctic day. Its last rays gleamed bloodlike for a moment on the drifting ice below, and then vanished like an extinguished light. And then around him was the swiftly gathering night,

and the white Arctic stars peered down at him incuriously as his plane thundered on.

For how long he sped on through the darkness, his eyes straining down through the pale starlight for some glimpse of the island, he could not later guess. He knew only that his whole attention was suddenly attracted by a glow of light from ahead, a flood of pure, brilliant white light that welled up from behind the northern horizon in frosty splendor. And as he raced on toward it he knew that it could be no aurora, for it was taking form as a great perpendicular ray, or beam, a gigantic, dazzling beam that seemed to stab straight up into the zenith. Swiftly it seemed growing in brilliance, until it had become so blinding to Warren's eyes that he seemed to be flying into a radiant white sun. He was on the point of swerving to one side to regain his power of sight when there came, with casual abruptness, the end.

A blast of wind of tremendous power struck his plane with a dizzying shock; it spun madly in midair in a crazy whirl of light and darkness, and then was tumbling swiftly downward through the darkness of the upper night. As it cometed downward, Warren, with a last instinctive reaction, pulled back the control-stick in his hands, swinging the ship's nose upward. The next moment the plane had struck something with a mighty shock, he was flung violently against the cockpit's side, and as his head struck its rim he felt himself catapulted into a sudden, flame-lit unconsciousness.

How long it was before Warren struggled up from the dark depths of oblivion he could not estimate. He became aware first of hands upon him, touching him, hands that sought to bring him back to consciousness by rubbing wrists and temples. For a moment he lay motionless, with closed eyes, and then as remembrance rushed over him he scrambled to a sitting position. Unbelievingly he stared about him.

He was sitting on a long, sandy beach, a beach lit by a steady white light whose source was somewhere behind him. A few yards away long waves were rippling in against the beach, from a stretch of waters that extended out into the darkness. Not far away he made out the shape of his own plane, drawn up on the sand and apparently not seriously damaged by its crash. From high overhead came a keening of powerful winds, but where he sat only a warm, balmy breeze stirred the air, and though someone had stripped from him his heavy flying-suit he felt uncomfortably warm.

Warren stared for a moment in utter bewilderment, unable to connect his surroundings with the bitter Arctic seascape that was his last memory. Then abruptly he became aware of a man kneeling beside him, a young man whose clothing was torn and disheveled and whose face showed strangely haggard and drawn beneath the white light that fell upon it. He was gazing at Warren with burning eyes, and when the airman turned toward him he spoke in a tense whisper.

"You're all right?" he asked. "I heard your plane—saw it fall——"

Warren raised his arm weakly and strove to speak. "This place," he said; "warm—where am I?"

The other laid a swift warning hand on his lips. "Speak low, man," he breathed. "God knows how near they are," he added, in a whisper, turning his eyes from Warren and toward the source of the white light that fell upon his face. Warren himself turned toward it and then crouched motionless, gazing in sudden awe. For there, miles and miles away, blazed the great light he had seen from his plane, a single huge shaft of frosty white brilliance that soared straight up into the heavens, looming up like a gigantic pillar of

white luminescence, stupendous, incredible, paling the stars and throwing a thin, ghostly illumination over all things around him.

Warren was silent before the sheer wonder of the thing, his brain reeling. Beside him the other was speaking again. "You came down on the water there," he was saying, "and I saw, and pulled your plane up on the beach here. This is Corson Island."

"Corson Island!" repeated the airman. "It was this place I was trying to reach! And you——"

"I am David McQuirk," was the other's answer. "You know of our expedition? You've heard?"

Briefly the Canadian explained how the *Delight's* last, mysterious message had aroused the interest of the world and had resulted in his own attempt to reach the island by plane. When he had finished, the man beside him was brooding darkly.

"So Chapman lived to send a message," he said, half to himself. "God, man! if you had but understood what he was trying to tell you! For while we talk here, they are somewhere to the south, spreading death and terror over the nations."

He was silent for a moment, and when he spoke again it was on a new thread of thought. "Warmer and warmer—hour by hour—and the end comes soon—and all our fault!" He broke off, his voice a dry, despairing whisper.

Warren felt reason leaving him as he listened to the other's words, felt the stir of warm, heavy air around him where there should have been only a frozen, bitter waste. But abruptly the man beside him was speaking on, his voice low and eager now.

"Yet you and I," he was saying, "even yet we might win, if you but understood——"

He paused for a moment, seemed to struggle for self-control, and then continued in a voice he strove to keep calm: "You know already, you say, about our expedition, and you know how we came north to find the legended ruins which Angus believed to exist on this island. It was on September 3rd, less than three weeks ago, that we got here, and beached our schooner securely on the island's coast.

"It seemed a dreary enough place, covered with the great folds of the polar ice which had lain upon it for ages, and cowering beneath the bitter polar cold, a desolate, frozen desert. We minded its appearance but little, though, for we were intent on getting into the interior and finding the fabled ruins. So our preparations were rushed, and three days after reaching the island our party, with its motor-sledges, started into the interior, leaving the schooner's officers and crew aboard the ship.

"I AM not going to tell now of the days we spent ranging the island's interior in search of the place of ruins. A week we spent without result, and it began to seem that, after all, the tale was only another baseless native legend. Angus himself was half crazy over the thing by then, utterly unlike the brother I had known and loved since childhood, all his fanatic scientist's soul bent upon the search. Though some of us were convinced by then that our quest was useless, he drove us on, and in the end, miles in the island's interior, we found what we sought.

"It was at the top of a low, ice-covered mound that our search ended. For there, rising out of the ice on the mound's broad summit, were the great walls of stone, just as the Eskimos had told—cyclopean walls of gray stone, the exposed parts of which were crumbling from the storms of ages. Here and there, too, were twisted wrecks of metal, beams and girders of a strange silvery metal that was as shining and unoxidized as it must have been when new. And at the very center of the broad summit was the

most enigmatic object of all, a large dome of the same smooth, silvery metal, whose upmost, rounded tip only projected through the ice, though we could faintly glimpse the rest of its shape through the solid, transparent veil of the ice.

"For a time after our discovery of the ruins, Angus was like a madman. He was not thinking now of the immense, precedent-shattering importance of our discovery, nor of the honors the world would accord him for it, but was driven on by an intense, overwhelming curiosity—an unholy curiosity to lay bare whatever secrets of the long-dead past might lie beneath us. All his interest was centered upon the smooth, enigmatic dome whose tip we could see, and it was around this, on the morning after our discovery, that we began our work.

"It required but an hour's work with our ice-picks to show us that excavating the dome in this manner would be a task of months. In the schooner, though, were large supplies of a special chemical compound which we had brought with us, a heat-generating compound akin to thermit, a small amount of which would give off enough heat to melt a large volume of ice. So we sent the Canadians back with the motor-sledge to the ship to procure this, Dr. Lowell going with them. When they came back, two days later, they were accompanied by the schooner's officers and crew, who had become excited over the news of our discovery and wished to witness the excavations. Although the ship itself was thus left quite alone it was securely beached and could come to no harm.

"On the following morning, therefore, we began our work, the crew helping us to scatter the powdered compound on the ice in a hundred-foot circle around the dome's projecting tip, and then pouring on it the igniting acid. At once the process began, generating a terrific heat, and swiftly the ice in that hundred-foot circle melted, canals having been cut to carry away the water as it did so. Hour after hour we continued the process, placing more and more of the compound on the ice, until by late in the afternoon it had eaten down to a depth of almost twenty feet, a great pit in the ice more than a hundred feet across, out of which rose the dully gleaming, half-cylindrical bulk of the metal dome, itself some twenty feet in diameter. Still we kept on, until at last the pit was more than a score of feet in depth and its floor was brown, frozen earth. We had burned our way directly down through the ice to the earth beneath.

"By that time it was near sunset, and all of us had flocked down the steps we had cut in the pit's icy side, our curiosity mounting to fever heat. What were we to find inside that metal mystery? Books or models or records that would make clear to us the history of whatever long-dead race had built it? The sailors and our three Canadians were as interested now as we ourselves, and with the rest of our party they hung near us in a little group as Angus, Dr. McGrath and I advanced upon the dome. There were no openings or sign of openings in those smooth metal sides, and Angus swung up the crowbar in his hand to sound the metal wall. Then, abruptly, he stopped short, while on every heart there lay for a moment a cold hand of terror. For from inside the dome, which had lain beneath the ice for ages, there had come a sound —a low, muffled sound that was like the deep note of a muted bell!

"We stood quite still, gazing at one another with wild eyes, a sick dread stealing into our souls. A tomblike silence had fallen, and still we stood and stared, while northwestward the crimson, descending sun lit up the whole scene with its weird light. Another muted note came from the dome's interior, and another, and then, quite without warning, the whole

metal dome itself suddenly glowed with misty white light and sent a sudden wave of smothering, radiant heat rolling out over us. Beneath that warm radiance the pit's interior warmed instantly to a point where we sweated in our furs, while the ice of its sides began suddenly to melt and drip. There was a silence that must have lasted for minutes, and then, in the dome's smooth side, a door began to open.

"It opened like no door we had ever seen before. The only thing to which I can compare it is the opening shutter of a camera-lens, a steadily expanding circular aperture. One moment we glimpsed a tiny hole in the dome's metal wall and then the hole was larger, and larger, widening out until it was a circle five feet across, at the wall's bottom. Our eyes, dazzled by the sunlight and the misty light from the dome itself, could not pierce the darkness of its interior, but out from it came a breath of intensely hot air, and a smell of strange and pungent chemicals which was, somehow, terrifying. Silent, motionless, we gazed at that amazing door. And then there was a stir in the darkness inside it, a sound of movement, and through it there came—a thing.

"It was a thing out of nightmare, a monstrous, incredible thing that filled us with horror inconceivable. Standing less than five feet in height, it was vaguely reminiscent of a toad because of its spotted back and front skin of sickly white, but the form was not toadlike, not reptilian at all, except for the cold, unwinking eyes. There were two short, straight lower limbs, seemingly stiff and unjointed, and two short upper limbs which gave the thing a grotesque manlike appearance. The body, or trunk of the thing, was smooth, dead-white, and except for the two staring eyes the only features in its bulbous, unhuman head were close-set ears and a narrow slit of a mouth which opened and closed with its breathing. There was a dreadful silence, then, as we returned its gaze.

"How long we stared thus I can not say, but I know that the spell was suddenly broken by a dozen smothered cries of horror from behind me as the group in the pit reeled back, while we three, nearest the thing, stood rigid. A moment only the group behind me staggered back, and then death was upon them. One of the creature's short arms came up, a silvery tube in its grasp, and from that tube intense red light leapt toward the running men, a crimson ray beneath which they staggered and fell, lay upon the ground in horribly shrunken little masses of distorted flesh. Chapman alone, who had been standing on the steps themselves, managed to reach the top of them, but even before he could leap outside and away from the pit the ray had swung upward and struck glancingly along his right side. I saw the flesh itself twisting terribly beneath the ray, and then he was gone. I could not at the time know his fate, but I know now that he must have dragged himself back to the schooner to send out that warning message before he died.

"All of this had taken but a few seconds to enact, and Angus, McGrath and I still stood motionless, the only ones left alive, and waiting in petrified terror for our own death. The toad-creature in the doorway seemed to regard us, its inhuman eyes shifting over us, and then it moved toward us, while behind it another appeared in the doorway.

"The sight of that was too much for McGrath, and with a choking cry he reeled back, ran shakily toward the pit's side. Before he had gone a dozen paces the red ray flashed after him and in a moment he, too, lay a distorted thing of cloth and flesh upon the ground. By then others of the toad-men had emerged from the dome, until there were more than a dozen of them before us. They seemed to

be regarding us, and then we heard their speech for the first time, a confused, clicking whispering, while the one nearest us still threatened us with his deadly ray-tube. Then two of the others came toward us with metal clamps in their hands, clamps which they fastened upon our wrists and ankles tightly. We sprawled upon the ground, prisoners—prisoners of these creatures whom we ourselves had released from the ice beneath which they had slept for ages!

"During all this time the dome itself had continued to glow with intense, radiant heat, and now one of the toad-men brought forth from inside it a long, hoselike, flexible metal tube, one end of which remained inside the dome while the other ended in a flat nozzle. This was pointed toward the icy sides of the pit, and instantly from the nozzle there sprang a broad beam of the same misty light and heat which glowed from the dome, a concentrated ray of radiant heat beneath which the ice crumbled and melted instantly. Within a half-hour, using this broad ray, they had melted all of the tons of ice upon the mound's summit, the waters rushing down its slopes in torrents. The melting of the ice uncovered a waste of shattered ruins on the summit and also uncovered no less than a score of close-grouped domes of almost the same size as the one beside us.

"Upon these, one by one, the broad heat-ray was then turned, and beneath its touch each gave forth the three muted notes and then opened like the first, though none glowed with radiant heat as the first had done. And from the lens-shutter door of each came forth some ten to twelve of the toad-creatures. I saw then that whatever apparatus was inside these domes was thermostatically operated, being automatically actuated by any heat from outside, and that it was the heat from our ice-melting compound which had actuated the apparatus of the first.

"By that time complete darkness had fallen, but now the summit of the mound was illuminated by the light of the glowing, central dome. And the heat from its radiant sides was so intense that on the summit it was as warm and balmy as a summer's day, while beyond the summit stretched the great fields of ice—a tiny oasis of warmth in a desert of Arctic desolation and cold. And now the toad-men, more than two hundred in number, became extraordinarily active, bringing forth tools and instruments and small, complicated mechanisms from the domes and beginning to link great strips of metal into a large framework, beside us. They stayed always within the heat-area of the clustering domes, though, and a few moments later I saw the reason for this; for one of them, bringing a long metal section from a dome near the summit's edge, was jostled by another and pushed for a second outside the circle of the glowing heat. At once he seemed to quiver spasmodically, dropped his burden and fell and writhed violently on the ground, and then lay still, his white flesh turning swiftly to a deep black. It was apparent that these creatures died instantly when subjected to extreme cold; hence their caution.

"The rest paid but little attention to the mishap of their companion, working on at the great framework beside us, until at last I forgot the desperateness of our position and drowsed and slept. When I awoke it was daylight around us, but all on the summit seemed unchanged, the toad-men working on at their metal structure while we lay pinioned and helpless, watching them. Once we were handed a metal container of water and some hard sticks of brown, fibrous stuff which was their only food, and which we ate hungrily enough. Again, though, after unnumbered, despairing hours, I drowsed away while they worked, and when I awoke, sometime during

that night, I was astounded and horrified to find that two of the creatures were crouching beside us and endeavoring to carry on a conversation with Angus, who was essaying to utter some of their own clicking, whispering tones.

"It was only then that I learned that the intensity of our search had unhinged my brother's mind, and fathomed the depths of his madness. For he told me that he was determined to throw in his lot with these toad-men, at whose mercy we were, and who were, he claimed, infinitely the superiors of man in intelligence and science. All my horror-stricken remonstrances went for nothing with him, and day after day he spent hours in learning the murmuring whispers and clicks of the toad-men's speech, until at last, four days after our capture, he had attained to an exchange of ideas with them and learned for the first time who and what they really were.

"And it was through him, then, that I learned what a horror we had loosed upon the world. These creatures, I learned, had inhabited earth eons ago, when it was still a warm, steaming ball. Ages before the forerunners of man were born their civilization and their cities had risen in what was then earth's most habitable portion, the regions around the northern pole. And on an island in those regions, the island we now call Corson Island, had stood the greatest of their cities.

"Theirs was a civilization which had endured for centuries and which, it seemed, could be menaced by no power on earth, but at last it was threatened with certain destruction by the greatest of all powers on earth, the southward drift of the great tides of glacial ice. For, as the ages passed, ice had formed around the northern pole, little by little, and now that ice began to drift slowly south, a majestic, resistless white tide which nothing could stand against.

"It seemed to mean extinction for the toad-men, since their scientists predicted that the ice would roll south until it covered all earth, before it receded. And their own bodies, inured for ages to the warm, steaming climate of the young earth, died instantly when subjected to bitter cold. There seemed no possible escape for them, but at last a plan for escape was devised, a plan which made use of the biological phenomenon known as suspended animation.

"It is a thing which we know little enough about, now. We know that some animals and insects can remain without air, food or water for great stretches of time, lying in deathlike sleep until revived to live again. We know, too, that certain Hindoo fakirs have been buried in earth and let lie for days, then dug up and brought back to life again. One of our own scientists, the great French biologist Berthelot, had studied the phenomenon and had become convinced that so long as there is no molecular disintegration the body of any animal might lie with animation suspended for unlimited time, and live again when restored from its long sleep. And the scientists of the toad-men had studied it even more, and knew a process which could induce this living death in themselves for unlimited lengths of time.

"It was this secret which they now used to save their race. For it was their plan to bury themselves and lie in this deathlike sleep while the ice rolled south over them, and then when it rolled back, though it were centuries later, they could rise from that sleep and again build up their cities. So on the island of their greatest city, on Corson Island, they constructed countless strong, dome-shaped little buildings of metal, fitted with all necessary apparatus and scientific equipment, and into each of these went a certain number of the toad-men. Once inside, they closed the wall and released the chemicals which

suspended animation in themselves. And each of these domes was arranged with thermostatic apparatus which, when the temperature outside rose again, would release other chemicals inside that would bring the sleepers back from their living death, so that when the ice rolled north again and the polar world warmed once more the domes would automatically revive and release the sleeping, imprisoned hordes inside.

"Over the island stood these domes, thousands upon thousands, holding vast hordes of the toad-men inside them; and at their center, in a score of domes grouped close together in a special spot, were their leaders and greatest scientists. These were last to enter and bring on themselves the living death, and when they had done so the last of the polar race was safe inside the domes. And soon, above them, the mighty floods of the polar ice rolled south, burying the domes and the cities of the toad-men beneath its frozen tons, forging south until it covered all earth.

"THEN, at last, the ice began to recede, but it receded only a few hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle and then stopped. The domes and cities of the toad-men it still covered, and so their hordes slept on beneath the ice, not knowing that their great plan had failed. And as the ages passed and man vaulted to supremacy and to science and power of his own, the polar race slept on beneath the ice, unconscious, like dead, waiting through the centuries in vain for the receding of the ice which would awaken and release them.

"And then our expedition had come, drawn north by the tale of the fabled ruins, and had released them from that first dome through the heat of our ice-melting compound, which had been sufficient to actuate the thermostatic apparatus inside, releasing the chemicals and awaking the toad-men from their eon-old sleep, and releasing too the radiant heat from the dome's sides which made it safe for them to venture outside. We had released them, had loosed a horror out of long-dead ages upon the world, and now they were working to awaken and release all their hordes that slept in domes beneath the island's ice, to bring those hordes back into life and power and seize the world from man!

"It was for that that they were working on the great mechanism beside us. For that mechanism was to be a great heat-magnet, a magnet which would be able to bend and attract heat-vibrations as Einstein has shown that light-vibrations are bent and attracted by the bodies they pass in space. They would project from this great magnet a shaft of terrific force out into space, which should bend and attract and suck down the vibrations of radiant heat which flood unceasingly outward through space from the sun, and this concentrated heat drawn down by the great magnet upon the island would be of sufficient intensity to overcome the bitter polar cold and melt all ice on the island, and in time would raise the temperature to such a degree of warmth that the apparatus inside each of the island's thousands of domes would be actuated. That would mean the revival and release of the hordes inside, who would come forth to seize the world.

"It was the plan of the toad-men, too, before this happened to flash south and strike at the present civilization of man, which Angus had described to them, a series of mighty blows, which would prevent any chance of their being interfered with in their work on the island. Their domes themselves were fitted with lifting and propulsion-ray apparatus by which they could attain terrific speed, and it was in these that they would venture south, first in a small terrorizing party and then in all their vast hordes, when those hordes had been awakened.

"This was the plan which I heard,

in helpless horror, and then Angus himself told me that he was going to join forces with the toad-men and help them. All my protestations and entreaties had no effect on his crazed mind, and for hours he continued his whispering speech with our captors. And finally they released him from his bonds and he began to help them, working with them on the great heat-magnet mechanism.

"That mechanism had taken form as a giant metal cylinder, the connections from which seemed mostly to run down into the earth itself. Set in its side were its controls, a row of shining little levers like the semaphore-controls in a railway signal-tower, and below them was a single large lever of burnished red metal. Swiftly the great mechanism approached completion until at length, last night, it was finished, and was at once put into operation, one of the creatures pressing the small shining levers in a certain order and then pressing down the red one.

"At once, quite noiselessly but with the swiftness of terrific power, there sprang from the top of the great upright cylinder a blinding shaft of brilliant light, stabbing up toward the stars, projecting far out into space from earth, I knew. And almost at once, it seemed, a flood of radiant heat rolled down from the shaft and outward over the island—a flood of heat sucked earthward by the shaft of force from the space-speeding heat-vibrations of the radiant sun itself. It rolled over the island and set the ice-fields to melting and dripping in a few minutes, while from above came a shrilling of great winds as the warm air currents from the shaft drove up and outward, the same currents which later caught your own plane as it neared the island and whirled it down. Hour followed hour while that flood of heat from the light-shaft poured down. The toad-men had snapped off whatever apparatus made their own central dome glow with heat, apparatus which it alone had possessed, evidently. And now they began to prepare the domes on the summit for the first sally south.

"Through all of the next day, today, they worked, Angus helping them, and through all the day I glimpsed from where I lay the ice of the island melting and running away, while around the mound a vast forest of dully gleaming metal domes began to emerge from the melting ice. By late afternoon all ice on the island had melted and vanished, and there were wet brown soil and the thousands of metal domes. By that time, too, the work of the toad-men on the summit had ceased, and now, in their own domes, they rose with whining power above the island and raced south, flashing the crimson ray upon the beached schooner as they passed over it and then speeding on.

"I knew upon what mission of dread they were speeding south, and then, at last, I knew utter despair. They had left behind them a score or more for guards, Angus among them, who were watching now the operation of the great heat-attractive shaft above us. With each hour the thing was raising the temperature on the island higher, and soon would be releasing the hordes in the domes around us. My hope had reached its lowest ebb, then, when suddenly it welled up again.

"I had glimpsed suddenly a metal tool one of the workers had dropped near by—a long, thick blade with a serrated edge. Cautiously I crawled toward this and at last had it, unnoticed by the guards who were clustered beneath the great cylinder. Then, holding the tool between my knees, I drew the metal clamp that held my wrists back and forth across the serrated edge.

"Slowly, toilsomely, I worked on at this, ceasing when any of the guards glanced toward me, then working on. It was night, by then, and with each minute the warmth of the air around

me seemed to be increasing. At last, after an effort that seemed hours in length, the bond that held my hands gave way, and at once I was filing away at the clamp around my ankles.

"Within a few more minutes I had severed this, too, and then glanced cautiously toward the guards. None was observing me, for the moment; so I quietly slipped back and over the edge of the mound's summit, stealing down its side and then running frantically through the lanes of metal domes which lay around me. I heard whispering cries behind me, a sudden clatter of pursuit, but ran blindly on, no thought in my head except to leave behind me those things of horror who pursued. At last pursuit seemed to die away, and I found myself at the island's shore. And as I reached it I heard the droning of a motor above, saw your plane spin down into the water, and managed to drag it up onto the beach.

"And now, you understand—you understand the thing that menaces our world, the creatures of hell who stir and wake to spring upon it. For soon, now, very soon, the waxing warmth will open the thousands of domes upon this island, revive and release the hideous hordes inside. Already their first attack has gone south to stagger and stun our world, and once those hordes inside the domes are loosed they will go south in all their might, annihilate the civilization that we know and bring earth beneath the rule of the toad-men for all time!"

5

SILENCE reigned when David McQuirk had ceased to speak—a silence that was to Warren's ears thunderous. On the beach before them long waves were washing in, and from high above came the whine of winds, but except for these there was utter stillness. Then abruptly the other stood up, and the airman did likewise. Together, without speaking, they gazed toward that shaft of blinding white light that split the night ahead.

"There is—one chance," David was saying, his eyes fixed upon that column of frosty brilliance. "If we could get to that heat-magnet, that cylinder, and destroy or turn it off, such action would stop this increasing warmth and prevent the domes from opening. It would be a respite, at least. But if we do not——"

Warren spoke, striving to keep his voice steady. "If there's a chance," he said, "there's nothing for it but to try."

"Have you any weapon?" asked the other, and the airman strode toward the plane and drew from its holster in the cockpit a heavy automatic pistol. He hesitated a moment, then handed it to the other. You take it," he told him. "I was always a rotten shot."

David McQuirk grasped it eagerly, swiftly examining magazine and action, and then straightened. He glanced once more at the light-shaft ahead, then back to Warren, and without speaking the two started off toward the great beacon that was their goal.

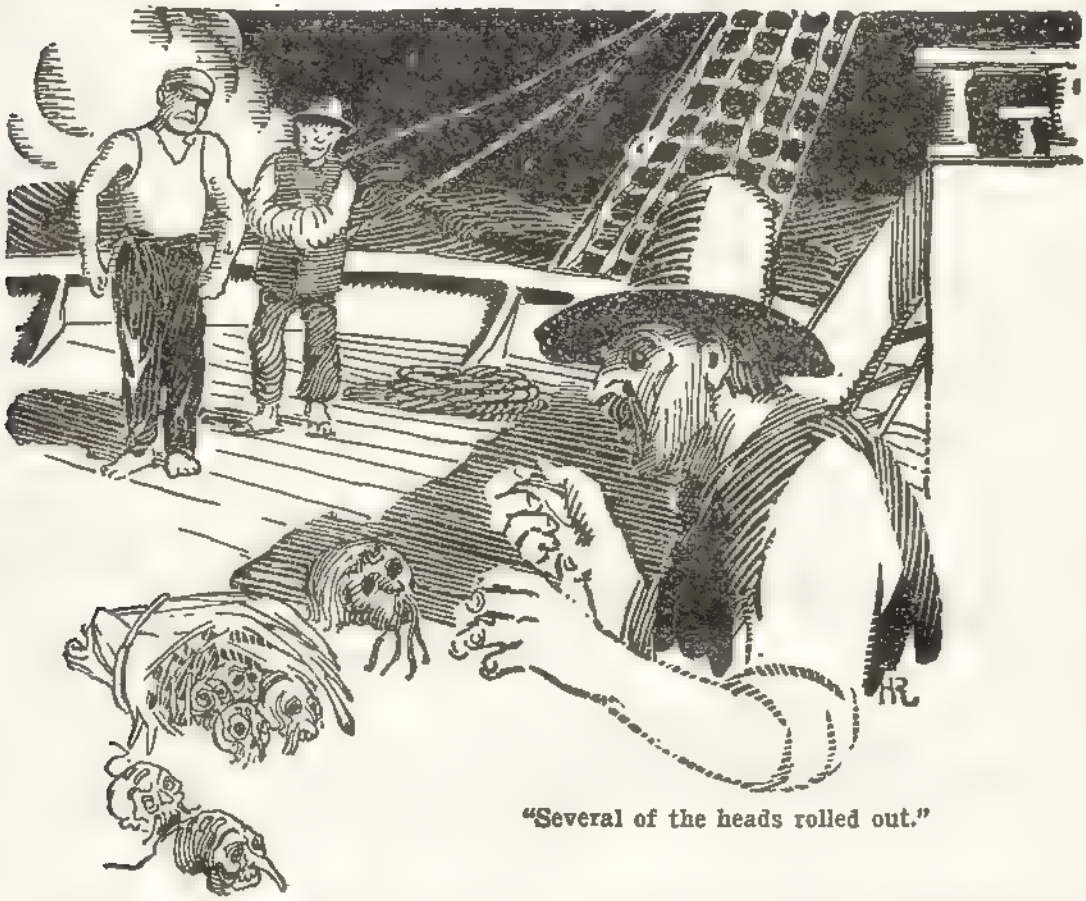
A thousand feet in from the beach a dark, humped shape loomed before them, and as they strode past it Warren saw it for a dome like those David had described, of dully gleaming metal, a thing twenty feet in height and of equal diameter at its base. Inside it, Warren knew, lay others of the toad-men, sleeping their sleep of ages, but soon to be awakened now unless their mission succeeded. He strode on, after McQuirk.

Before them, now, and on both sides, long rows of the same metallic dome-structures extended into the distance, and from a slight elevation which they crossed Warren glimpsed square mile upon square mile covered with a forest of them, realized what vast hordes must lie within them.

(Continued on page 717)

The HEAD from ECUADOR

ROBERT LEE HELSER



"Several of the heads rolled out."

ALL up and down the coasts of the world, from the Greasy Spoon hard by the street of a hundred tongues, to Tampa, Florida, and aboard the T. I. O. steamers to Indo-China, you will hear the tale. Always, they add a bit to the telling until, now, the yarn has become quite interesting. Who knows? Perhaps the story is true; anyway——

Beef Mullins, in gaudy pink shirt, tousled of hair, dusky of hide—a half-breed, son of a white beachcomber who went native where the big iron wagons make port in Guayaquil—told the tale originally on the deck of the *Drifting Owl*, with the dome over his head sprinkled by a million glittering stars, with the water lapping musically against the hull, and the reek of spices, oranges, and the sweet-scented fruit blossoms drifting out from the tropical forests of Ecuador.

The expedition which the *Drifting Owl* had carried down from two thousand miles north had gone into the interior to search—to buy for Daniel J. Hack, their employer—some gruesome, awe-inspiring ornaments for Hack's amusement enterprises. The ornaments these men hoped to buy from the Jivaro natives were small, shriveled-up, dried, human heads.

While the hunters were away Dan Hack remained behind with Beef Mullins, Skipper Griswold, and several others.

A full week had gone by and nothing had been heard from the expedition in the hills. Back aft the yellow cook was fingering a one-stringed Chinese fiddle. Down here under the lazy warmth of the tropics the music sounded more supernatural than it does in the opium dens of Chinatown. The mascot dog, shaggy and flea-bitten, urged by the squeak of the fiddle, pointed his nose toward the silver orb of a moon and howled—aye, just as his forefather, the wolf, with his tail between his legs, howled for his mate hundreds of years before the slow change to dogdom. Probably this was the real reason why the dog howled, but Skipper Griswold saw something else in the mascot's actions.

"Aye," growled the skipper, casting a glance in the direction of the fiddling Chinese, "somebody's goin' to die."

"Bah, you believe in that rot?" sneered a scrawny-necked Chicago gutter rat who was making his first trip to sea as a mess-boy.

"Dogs, now," continued the skipper, as though he had not heard the interruption of the scrawny-necked one, "dogs, now, can see things that we poor mortals can only guess at. Sometimes I think they can see across the border-line of death. Have you ever noticed how a dog will stop suddenly, growl, put his tail between his legs and slink at his master's heels when his owner can see no apparent reason for his actions? What does the dog see?"

"Yeh," said Beef Mullins, feeling in his shirt pocket for cigarette makings, "yeh, dogs is funny creatures. Now, if as you say, someone is going to die, who is that someone?"

Beef stopped, shifted himself to a more comfortable position on the overturned water-bucket, and looked through squinted eyes at Hack who was patrolling abaft the forward deck, always looking out toward the shore-line as though he was anxious to catch sight of an approaching party—a party which had been in the hills of Ecuador for more than a week now.

"Him, maybe, eh?" asked Beef, jerking his head in the direction of Dan Hack. "I don't know, exactly, why I should think th' dog howls for him, but——"

The dusky-faced sailor held the flare of a match to his cigarette. The light cast a glow over the seams and wrinkles. The skipper saw the nerves twitching in the sailor's neck as he sucked on the white paper column.

"Yeh," said Beef, flicking the match stick over the rail, "yeh, he's a queer chap, this Daniel J. Hack. He's a regular he-devil, if you know what I mean. His morals are all twisted up. They's only two things in Dan's brain: his shows and how to make them pile up dollars, and Asia Amerilla, the girl who went out with the expedition. He's got heaps of money, but he ain't got Asia—not yet, he ain't, but I'm afeered, aye, mightily afeered that Dan will have her yet. Unless that dog knows what he is howling for."

"Meanin' what?" asked Skipper Griswold. "You been with th' owner o' this tub for a long while, ain't you?"

"Yeh, I ought to know; I been knowin' Dan Hack ever since he lugged hay for th' bulls in th' Golden Gate Circus. Then th' shows belonged to Warbler Gobet and Dan Hack coveted them—I dunno, now, I dunno about that dog, maybe he does know what he's howlin' for. Listen!

"Th' whole thing started back there in Toledo, Ohio, when Warbler Gobet, a smile on his face and a

hole in his pocket—both quite natural for the Warbler—came up out of nowheres to take charge of th' Golden Gate Shows.

"THIS here circus what I'm tellin' you about ain't nothin' more than a few wild animals pacin' back and forth in gaudily painted cat-wagons, a pile of blue trunks and a lot of dirty canvas, with performers driftin' in from th' four quarters of th' globe to start south with her.

"We came, rags and patches, silks and satins, spangles and cheesecloth, and dumped our baggage at th' Warbler's feet. We found him on th' lot with his high, patent-leather boots covered with Toledo mud. His big hat was pulled down even with th' range of his eyes. Th' wind whipped th' crimson scarf which was knotted loosely about his neck, and, jerking his brass-knot-studded belt a bit higher, he smiled—smiled in the face of a hard, hard world. That's why they called him Warbler; for his lips puckered up and he started to whistle away his troubles.

"'Carry your outfit in a bag, eh?' he said to Professor Ellowell Williams—th' Lord only knows why he called himself professor, or where he ever found such a peculiar name; for, listen, he was an Indian. I know, for the same blood runs in my veins.

"'Yes,' answered th' professor. His voice was not bad to listen to. He had learned much in th' white man's school. 'Yes, the best-paying bet on the lot,' replied the professor, suddenly dumping the bag's contents on the ground.

"'Gosh!' exclaimed Dan Hack, eyeing the terrible objects. He was th' only person there who did not step back and grimace at th' horrible things. He seemed fascinated. 'Where did they come from?'

"'Ah, my friend, dried heads, they came from the jungles of Ecuador. The Indian head-hunters bring down their game, human game, with blow-guns, pouf! Just so!' Th' professor guy makes a circle with his fingers, puckers up his lips and illustrates his meaning 'pouf!' just like that. 'Interesting, eh?'

"'Humph,' grunted Hack. He stood there for a long while looking at the heads. 'Little, ain't they?'

"'Yes, shrunken. Hot sand and pebbles are placed inside the head after the nape of the neck has been slit and the skull removed. Then—ah! then it is turned over and over, for days. Patiently, lovingly the Jivaro does his work, slowly, until it has been—what you call it in English?—cured?'

"Hack moved from one foot to th' other, raised his cap, scratched his head with his little finger, and allowed his eyes to travel over th' little company of performers who had collected. He noted Asia Amerilla with her knees pulled almost to her chin so's to be as far away as possible from th' gruesome objects. Asia was—well, you know she's a beauty; you've seen her.

"Right then and there trouble started. At first sight of Asia Amerilla three men decided they could not live under th' same big top without owning her—now, skipper, you knows as well as Beef Mullins that they ain't never one woman made so's she could be divided 'twixt three men—ain't nowise possible. Me, I just watched what happened.

"Th' Golden Gate entrained immediately. We were billed through th' South with our objective at Tampa, Florida, where th' Warbler intended goin' into winter quarters. Everything went lovely until we reached Asheville, North Carolina. Money rolled into th' box office and th' sun seemed bent on lighting up our path. Never saw so many days without rain in all my life. We

were always one jump ahead of th' rainstorms. Professor Ellowell Williams' dried heads were th' biggest card on th' bill. He collected a quarter at his side shows for every half-dollar that went via th' main entrance to th' big top; and Warbler Gobet—well, th' Warbler couldn't stand prosperity.

"Warbler Gobet arrived perched on top of a property wagon, whistlin' and wobblin' from side to side as th' six-horse team tugged at th' teamster's handful of lines. Gobet was drunk. He'd been drunk ever since we left th' Ohio River.

"Th' tents were up in all their snowy whiteness, and while th' Warbler snored in a pile of canvas behind th' cook tent, arrangements were bein' made for th' night performance.

"Asia Amerilla had asked Dan Hack to pull up th' slack in her guy lines. I happened along just as th' professor approached th' girl.

"'Asia, have you decided to give me an answer?' asked the exhibitor of dried heads.

"'No, really, Professor, I've forgotten all about the matter. It would be well if you did the same.'

"'But, Asia, I love you——' started th' professor again. He placed a hand on her arm. Dan Hack looked up from his work with a murderous scowl on his face. It would have been well had Ellowell Williams considered Dan Hack's presence.

"'And I—I do not love you. Besides, you are a nig—nig—Indian!' exclaimed th' girl.

"'But, Asia——'

"'Say!' exploded Hack, straightening up from his work and stepping forward, fists doubled in a threatening manner, 'if you're a nigger, you cut it out! Do you know what happens to black men who look too hard on white women in this country?'

"Th' professor was fumblin' for his knife. I saw th' gleam of its blade as his hand moved from his hip. Dan stepped back and reached for his own weapon.

"'Listen, you low-lifed scum!' yelled Williams, his voice high-pitched and th' muscles twitchin' in his neck, 'I'm an Indian, I'll admit that—aye, and if this woman will admit so much, she too is of my nativity——'

"'He lies! The beast lies!' screamed th' girl, leaping at th' professor, her fingers crooked, talonlike, a veritable tigress, her white teeth showing an' th' blood poundin' in her temples.

"Me, now, Beef Mullins, ain't goin' to stand quietly by and see men carve each other. I steps in and smooths things over. Both men stood staring at each other for a moment; then——

"'Ah, you scum, I'll have your head in my bag some of these days!' yelled Williams as he moved away shaking his fist at Hack.

"Hack smiled—a cruel smile that burned deep into th' soul of th' Indian—aye, I, Beef Mullins, know; for ain't I felt th' stir of Jivaro blood racin' through my veins at th' insults of white men?

"'I am sorry we are not in the Oriente.' Like vitriol the words dropped from th' Indian's lips. 'I'd add your head to those in the bag—*el diablo!*'

"I HAD occasion to go out back of th' cook tent later that evening. I leaned against a wheel of th' gilted band wagon, picked my teeth with a straw, and watched silently; like th' very shadows themselves I watched.

"Dan Hack came. He passed behind th' cook tent and looked upon th' circus owner who was sprawled on his bed of canvas, one leg drawn up and a half-empty whisky bottle clutched in his hand. Gobet moved his legs, drew th' bottle up until it almost touched his lips; then—as though th' effort was too great—th' fingers re-

laxed and th' bottle slid over th' canvas mound's side.

"This seemed to amuse Dan Hack. He laughed, his hands in his pockets and his feet spread wide. He threw back his head and bellowed gleefully.

"'You drunken fool,' whispered Dan to th' unhearin' circus owner, 'I'm not half bad-looking, but I'm only a circus roustabout—feeder of elephants, cleaner of pens—which makes you ace-high with Asia. Aye, but I'll change all that. I'll have your shows before we reach Tampa.'

"Dan did not have long to wait for his chance at Warbler Gobet's shows. It was only two hours later while th' people were driftin' toward th' exits from th' big top. Saturday night. Pay day. The next day being Sunday—in keeping with Warbler Gobet's religious belief—th' shows would spend th' day on th' lot. There were a lot of little things about Warbler Gobet which caused men to like him. He was rough, tough—but th' Warbler knew God.

"Tonight there were canvasmen in muddy overalls, cooks in undershirts, performers still wearin' their tights and spangles, clowns who had not yet washed th' grease-paint from their faces, all yearnin' to take a hand in th' poker game which was sure to follow close on th' heels of th' ghost of pay day. Coins of all denominations were heaped in th' center of th' table in th' cook tent. Those who could not find room on th' long, wooden benches leaned over th' other player's shoulders.

"Th' circus owner's whistle was heard outside. They could hear his stumblin' feet and th' commotion, when he sprawled, headlong, over th' guy-lines and stakes. Several of th' men leaped to their feet to go to his assistance, but they heard his whistle—th' same which brought him th' name of Warbler—and they knew he wasn't injured.

"'Oh, ho!' he roared as he parted th' tent flaps. His red neck-scarf was untied, his checkered vest was buttoned only at th' lower hole, his hat was crushed and dirty, and he wore only one boot. 'Oh, ho! A game and I'm not in it! Make room, boys; let th' king o' stud sit in!'

"They made room for him at th' head of th' table, with much laughter. Then th' game progressed. Soon th' coins in th' center of th' table were mixed with a scatterin' of bills, and there were not so many players left. During th' mornin' hours, one after th' other of th' men dropped out, and left Warbler Gobet playin' with th' man at th' opposite end of th' table.

"'Gettin' late, Mister Gobet,' remarked this man at th' opposite end of th' table from Gobet. This gentleman shuffled th' cards in a practised manner, slithering them, fan-shape, before him.

"'Why, Hack, you're winnin', ain't you?' asked Gobet, who was not near so drunk as he had been.

"Both men had been making heavy bets. Th' money was all goin' one way—to Dan Hack's pile. Th' Warbler saw th' receipts of th' ticket wagon slidin' toward his opponent.

"'Somethin's wrong,' mumbled Gobet, 'somethin's wrong, old-timer; you just naturally can't have such luck—square luck.'

"Th' circus owner moved down th' length of th' table. Hack moved across to th' other side so they might face each other.

"With this last move Dan Hack seemed to lose his confidence. Maybe he thought it unlucky to move to another seat.

"'We'd better stop now, Mister Gobet,' suggested Hack. He coughed nervously.

"'Ain't broke yet, Mister Hack; I'm bettin' you—I'm bettin' you''—Gobet looked at his cards—"I'm bettin' you my shows. All one big bet. My shows—lock, stock and

barrel, th' center pole thrown in—against th' pile at your elbow.'

"Warbler Gobet, now perfectly sober, leaned across th' table and glared into Dan Hack's eyes. Dan's lips were dry, and he ran his tongue out rapidly—like a snake.

" 'It's gettin' late, Mister Gobet, and—and——'

"Hack ran his fingers through his hair, looked about at th' few watchers who were left, glanced at his pile of money.

"Gus Vance, boss canvasman, stepped forward as though he would interfere. Th' professor—oh, he was there!—placed his hand on th' canvasman's arm and shook his head.

" 'Come on, you yellow hound—my shows against your money!'

"Th' Warbler scribbled a bill of sale on an old paper bag and tossed it into th' pot.

"Hack smiled—a pitiful, weak sort of a smile. He shoved his pile over alongside th' bill of sale.

"Warbler Gobet drew one card, and knew immediately that he was no longer owner of th' Golden Gate Circus unless Dan Hack held a mighty rotten hand. All th' circus owner had was an odd lot of cards with th' nine of clubs for high.

"Hack placed his cards on th' table, face up—he had three aces.

" 'Now, Mister Gobet, if you're lookin' for a job, I'm sure Gus Vance can find a place for you among his roustabouts,' said Hack, leaning forward to scoop in th' pot.

" 'No, thank you, Mister Hack. I'm going back where I came from. I'm a fish for drink when I'm prosperous. I gamble, and I cuss. Otherwise I'm just half and half. When I die I'll likely find it hard to get into heaven, because I never did anything particularly good. They will not let me in hell, because I never did anything particularly bad. You? Now, you need not worry about th' devil opening his gates for you. You've been plain lucky on this last deal. Not so with all th' hands which went before. It's a wonder th' boys will let you live when they learn your method of play. I saw to it that this last hand was square, and so you're welcome to th' shows. I hoped to win back what you had taken from th' boys. I caught you just before you dealt this last hand—that's why I moved.'

"With this, Warbler Gobet walked to th' far end of th' cook tent, took down th' cook's mirror and smashed it into many pieces on th' table-top. Then he bowed himself out at th' door. That was th' last any of us saw of Warbler Gobet. That's how Dan Hack came to be a promoter of amusement enterprises.

"It is needless to say that Dan Hack did not allow th' shows to stay on th' lot over Sunday. To th' new owner, Sunday was just another day. He made us pull stakes and entrain for th' next jump.

"CREEPIN' south along th' Seaboard Air Line, several days later, Professor Ellowell Williams made a last desperate attempt to spoil Dan Hack's chances of gaining Asia Amerilla as an addition to his success.

"Th' train had stopped among th' everlastin' pines to allow th' brakeman to pack a hot-box on a sleeper. We—Dan Hack, myself, and others—were swappin' yarns of th' road back aft in a half-filled baggage car. Suddenly an enraged tigress cat—Asia Amerilla—leaped among us!

" 'Look! Look!' she screamed. 'See what that fiend did!'

" 'Where is he?' yelled Hack, making for th' door.

" 'Wait—he's gone, there's no use trying to catch him! By this time he has lost himself among the saw grass and swamps. While I was asleep in my berth he crept in, pricked the flesh of my arm with a knife blade—a blade steeped in a poisonous derivative of *curare*, a deadly poison used by the Indians of Ecuador's interior. Then, when his work was finished, he fed me

salt and I recovered to see him escaping.'

"The girl was in tears now. Me, I knew—oh, I knew; for have I not seen the Indian use th' deadly dart in th' forests of Ecuador? Salt, plain salt, is th' only thing which will counteract its action. Th' Indian shoots monkeys with darts previously poisoned; th' little animal falls from th' tree; th' Indian captures him and immediately feeds salt. Th' result is a live monkey. Sometimes they poison th' streams to catch fish—oh, I know, I do.

"Th' professor had tattooed a peculiar set of marks across Asia's forehead. His purpose, evidently, was to spoil th' girl's attractiveness.

"'Tell Dan he can have you now, since I have spoiled your beauty!' was what Asia said he had called as he leaped for th' pines bordering th' railway tracks. 'As though Dan Hack could ever have me!' she finished.

"We ain't never seen nothin' of th' professor since then. Neither have we run afoul of Warbler Gobet. Dan Hack split th' Golden Gate into numerous shows that go north, east, south and west every season, and th' money has piled up for him. He hasn't yet been able to induce Asia to accept him.

"Th' marks on th' girl's forehead do not change her beauty to any great extent. You saw that before she left with th' expédition.

"Now, Gus Vance had pointed out to Dan Hack that th' loss of Professor Ellowell Williams and his dried heads was a blow to th' success of th' Golden Gate's side shows. Dan decided that an expedition into Ecuador for some of these heads would prove profitable. Therefore here we are on th' deck of this old tub, hard by th' coast, waitin' and watchin' for th' expedition's return, while th' danged dog howls to th' tune of th' Chinese cook's one-stringed fiddle."

"Aye," sang Skipper Griswold, "aye, howls for th' death o' someone; I'm tellin' you someone's goin' to die."

The little crowd collected about Beef Mullins became hushed. They looked up to find Dan Hack approaching. His face wore a worried expression.

"Skipper, do you think my men will have a hard time getting the heads?" Dan asked.

"Well, I dunno 'bout that," answered the captain, tearing his ration from a plug of tobacco with his yellow teeth. "Sometimes it's mighty hard to make th' natives part with 'em; then again, they'll sell 'emselves for a good, rusty gun. Was a time when head-huntin' was a sport with th' Jivaros; now it's a business. They discovered that th' white man would trade guns for 'em, so a feller's got to mind his eye if he don't want to lose his head.

"They's a story floatin' 'round as how a man was dead sot on gettin' a head with red hair. This gent offered a good price as a reward for such a head, and a little, sawed-off runt of an Irishman—or mebbe he was Dutch or Italian, I dunno—he went back for th' head. His stay was mighty long, and th' boss got sort o' peeved about havin' to wait so long for that red-haired head.

"Finally, when th' boss had about given up ever hearin' from th' red-headed head-hunter, a native came in with a head for sale. It had red hair and—bless your soul!—it was th' red-headed head-hunter's head itself."

Hack started to join the rest in laughter at this tale. Suddenly he thought of something, and although his mouth was open and the wrinkles of laughter already formed, no sound came across his lips. A look of horror crept into his eyes.

"I say, Captain Griswold, they've been gone now almost a month. I'm rather anxious about the girl who

went back with them. I wonder—oh, pshaw, I suppose she's all right."

"I dunno, I dunno, Mr. Hack; them Jivaros are a mighty cunnin' lot. I've hearn tell as how they got th' call o' monkeys down so pat that they call th' little man-animals down out o' th' hills so they can shoot 'em with their blow-guns. I'd a heap rather be safe and sound aboard my ship than cahootin' 'round among them jungles."

After that, Hack became exceedingly nervous. He ran to the rail to look every time a boat put out, and followed the skipper around at all hours of the day and night asking questions about the head-hunters.

WITHIN a few days word was brought by a half-naked native that the expedition was approaching. Not long after this they came aboard the ship, ragged, sunburned, and thin after their sojourn in Ecuador. Asia was not with them. Dan feared to ask about her. He ran to the rail, shaded his eyes, and looked out toward the shore without even greeting the newly arrived expedition.

"Well, Dan," said Gus Vance, who had headed the buyers of heads, "we've had fairly good luck."

Gus pointed to the bales coming aboard in the slings.

"Did you get the heads?" asked Dan absent-mindedly.

Dan looked about him as though he still expected to see Asia among them.

"Yes, think we got enough, and we only lost one of the party," answered Gus, running his big, red bandana handkerchief over his hot face.

"Gus, Gus! Who was lost? Not Asia!" Dan Hack was almost in tears, his lips trembled, and his hands shook as he fingered his chin.

"Now, don't fly off the handle, Dan; little things like that can't be helped. Yes, it was Asia."

"Dead?" asked Hack, hardly above a whisper.

"I don't know. Either that or else she has turned native. We went into a village to do some trading, and she just dropped out. By the way, we met an old friend of yours in that same village—Professor Ellowell Williams. Only he don't go by that name any more. He sold us several heads."

Gus kicked a bale to indicate the heads he had reference to, and then stood watching what happened.

The members of the expedition crowded around while Dan fell to his knees on the deck and began to tear frantically at the cloth and wicker covering of the bales.

He soon made an opening. It was his property. He had paid well for it. No one interfered. Several of the heads rolled out. He examined them closely until he found one with unusually light hair, a rawhide strap fastened to the back, long cotton cords sewed through the lips to hang like a beard. This one had peculiar marks tattooed in the forehead—the same marks that Professor Ellowell Williams had pricked in the flesh while Asia was under the influence of the mystical Indian poison.

It was the end of all things for Dan Hack. To him Asia was the greatest thing in the world. The realization that his own head-hunters had brought back the head of the woman he loved was more than the amusement promoter could bear. His brain went back on him.

Not a member of the expedition will forget the scream which Dan Hack uttered and the crazy words he babbled. The dog leaped to the poop deck and began his unearthly howling. The Chinese cook, arms hidden in his baggy calico sleeves, came shuffling forward to see what the commotion was over.

"Look out!" yelled Beef Mullins. "Grab him, someone!"

Dan Hack was scrambling up the shrouds before they could stop him, before they realized what he was about, and he was soon in the rigging. He called for Asia, cursed his crew, prayed to his God, tore his hair and

beat his breast like a monkey who has lost her young, shook his fist at the howling dog, and then leaped, far out and away from the rigging, into the sea.

BEEF MULLINS, aided by others of the crew, put forth in a small boat. They returned half an hour later to report that Dan Hack could not be found.

"Consarn that dog!" exclaimed Beef Mullins, shaking his fist at the dog, who was slinking toward the galley with his tail between his legs.

"Aye, I told you so," chimed the captain.

"Well, I'll be——" started Gus Vance. He scratched his head thoughtfully as he looked at the heads scattered over the deck. "I wonder if Dan mistook that for Asia's head? Why, confound it, that is only Ellowell Williams' private mark. He puts it on all the heads he takes—just as a man places his stamp on soap wrappers as a trade-mark."

"Beg your pardon, sir," spoke up a sailor who had been one of the party who had gone back into the interior with the expedition; "I think this chap Hack has been fooled all around. I know where Asia is. She found her husband back there in the jungles on the same mission as our own. I think this fellow Ellowell Williams called him Warbler Gobet. This Williams party tells me as how some crook flim-flammed Asia's husband out of his shows, and that she was engaged in milking the flim-flammer of some of his ill-gained wealth before he found out that she was married. In the meantime this Gobet chap had been hunting up odds and ends—among them some dried heads—with which to start a new show."

"Gosh," mumbled Beef Mullins, throwing his cigarette stub into the sea, "I always thought Warbler Gobet and this Asia girl were kinda thick—anyways, a dog sure does know when someone's gonna die."

"Aye, aye," answered Captain Griswold.

A Story of the Fire-Worshipers

FLAME OF THE AGES

By ROBERT CHOATE ALBRIGHT

SHABAD NAGAUR, high priest of the Fire Temple of Oudh, knelt in silence before the altar of the Parsees. Incense of a nauseating sweetness smoldered on the sacred shrine. A ruby-red flame burned steadily in a bronze bowl directly in front of the kneeling priest, casting its roseate light on the blackened walls of the ancient temple. More than a foot upward it mounted, suffusing all about it with a dull, red glow.

Such was the Soul of Ormuzd, God of the Guebres. For eons it had burned thus—since the beginning of time itself, Shabad had been taught to believe. And why should he doubt traditions which had been carried

down to him by generations of the holiest of mortals, high priests of the Temple of Oudh? Had he not proved himself an apt pupil to the venerable Sherhazur, his predecessor?

While yet a lad, Shabad had learned by heart the *Zend-Avesta*, the holy book of the Parsees, and had startled his teacher with his grasp of the Vohu Mano and the Akem Mano. Before many years had passed old Sherhazur had been unable to answer his questions, and had sent the boy to other temples that his thirst for knowledge might be satisfied. It was no wonder, therefore, when the aged Sherhazur passed away, that Shabad Nagaur, "the boy prophet," was made priest in his stead.

Far into the night Shabad knelt in silence before the altar of the Parsees, gazing intently at the ruby flame, the soul of the good deity Ormuzd. He must always gaze thus except at brief intervals when other priests of the Temple of Oudh took his place at the altar. For was it not written in the *Zend-Avesta* that Ahriman, the evil deity, always hovered near, waiting for the holy men to relax their vigil? What would happen then, Shabad for all his knowledge did not know. Three things alone concerned him—he was the high priest of Ormuzd; he must guard his shrine against Ahriman; he must watch the flame. It had been burning since the beginning of time; it must burn until the end. His ancestors had protected it despite the persecutions of the Persians. Throughout the bloody onslaughts of Calif Omar they had nourished it. Driven into exile, they had carried it with them into India and built for it the Temple at Oudh. And there it flamed before him, the fire symbol of Ormuzd.

But the priest of the Parsees is human, and being the wisest and most learned of his race, Shabad passed moments when he doubted many things—doubted even the tenets of his own religion. It was his wont to pass such thoughts off lightly, attributing them to the temptation of Ahriman, the evil one. But this night he dared to reflect longer than usual upon the fate which had placed one so learned as he to watch a little flame for the rest of his days, even though that flame be the symbol of the good deity Ormuzd.

Perhaps Shabad sank too deeply into revery. Perhaps the thickness of the incense made him strangely drowsy, for his eyes closed and his head fell forward upon his breast. Kneeling before his altar, the high priest of Oudh fell fast asleep.

When Shabad awoke it was with the realization that all was dark in the temple. The sacred fire no longer flamed before him. A terrible fear gripped his heart. Dazed, he groped his way to the altar. The bronze bowl was there, but it was cold, cold for the first time in all of the centuries.

The high priest fell prostrate to the floor and lay there trembling. He wondered why the walls of the temple did not tumble in upon him. Why did Ahriman not strike him down? But no, Ahriman would not strike him down. Ahriman must regard him with favor, for had he not through his own wanton carelessness destroyed a faith which was as old as the world itself? Had he not destroyed the soul of Ormuzd?

Shabad cursed the day he had been born—cursed himself for ever taking the holy vows. Better that long since he had been stretched in death upon the Temple of Silence, where the sacred vultures come each day to pick the flesh from the Parsee dead, and the bones fall one by one through the grating, into the vault below.

Reason told the high priest that Ahriman had not extinguished the flame. It had gone out, he told himself, because of his own stupid failure to replenish the bowl with sacred oil. Had he but kept his vigil, he

might have saved the ruby fire. But no, he had fallen asleep like a drunken low-caste! He pondered on the consequences of his fateful blunder. What would his people do now that the faith of their fathers was taken from them, destroyed by their most trusted guardian of the temple? Must they now seek another creed? Must they become hateful Mohammedans, Buddhist fools or Christian dogs? Shabad shuddered to think of it.

It was then that the thought came to him. Why should they ever know? It would be a simple matter to add oil to the bowl and rekindle the flame. The Parsees trusted him; they would never suspect what had taken place. They would come to the temple as of old and offer up sacrifices to the sacred fire, which, alas! was no longer sacred. They would never know that the soul of Ahriman burned in the flame in the place of the good deity Ormuzd.

Shabad's conscience rebelled. Had he, high priest of the Parsees, fallen so low? Would he thus make mock of the religion of his fathers? He sobbed audibly. What must he do? He dared not think of the wrath of his people when they found that the soul of Ormuzd no longer burned in the bowl of bronze. They would curse him, spit upon him and drive him from the temple. They would do more than that. They would tear out his heart and throw his body to the vultures, on top of the tower of the dead.

The high priest raised himself to his knees and listened intently. All was silent as death. Slowly he made his way through the darkness to the rear of the shrine, where with fumbling hands he opened a small door at the base of the altar. He drew from the covert a torch, which he lighted. Carrying the taper and a small urn, he returned to the front of the altar. Swiftly he filled the bronze bowl with oil from the urn, and applied the torch. The light sputtered a moment, then leapt to full height.

Shabad fell on his knees before the shrine. His body trembled convulsively and it seemed his heart would burst. For a few moments he struggled to gain control of himself. The deed was done beyond retraction, he reasoned. He must not falter now. Raising his head he called softly the name of the priest who each morning took his place before the altar. "Kotah!" he called. Again, in a voice higher pitched, he chanted, "Kotah!"

A rustling of robes was heard in a near-by corridor, and a priest appeared. He salaamed three times as he approached. Shabad returned the salutation, and with burning eyes searched the other's face. "Could Kotah know?" he asked himself. But if the priest had suspicions, his face did not betray them. He took his place beside Shabad before the shrine, and together they chanted a verse from the *Zend-Avesta*, to the glory of Ormuzd. It seemed to Shabad that he saw the hateful face of Ahriman grinning at him from the bowl.

Their devotions over, the high priest arose and went out of the room, leaving Kotah to guard the shrine.

As the sun rose to its fullest height in the heavens that morning, the holy men of the Temple of Oudh were in a high state of alarm. Though they had searched every corner and crevice of the temple, their high priest, Shabad Nagaur, could not be found. Finally one of them noticed the vultures circling in great numbers above the Temple of Silence. The priest thought it strange, for there had not been a death in Oudh for a fortnight. Climbing to the top of the tower, he found Shabad stretched upon the grating, his right hand clutching the handle of the sacrificial knife. He had plunged its golden blade deep into his heart.

The CAVE of SPIDERS

by WILLIAM R. HICKEY

"Over him they crawled, a veritable army of the bloated, venomous creatures."

THE whole affair from its conception was extraordinary. A strange adventure into an unknown region of the world, a strange discovery, and a strange conclusion. It had no equal in any fiction that I knew, and the actors were like characters in a drama.

Of Mrs. Seton I had learned much. Nowadays, when one reaches that indeterminate age which really tactful people designate as "over thirty," one doesn't fold one's hands and settle down to a grave, dignified old age. The modern woman refuses to grow old. It was not denied that Clara Seton was beautiful. Her eyes sparkled with the fire of life. She had not lost that priceless charm of youth. From a girl, red-blooded, daring, eager for a life of constant thrills and excitement, she had matured, only to crave even more the popularity, admiration and applause that follow the victorious participation in certain fascinating events.

But it was Graves in whom I was interested. I knew Mrs. Seton had long been infatuated with him. As he chatted with her in the lobby I went outside and waited. I did not want to lose him. I had met him in France, and there was something about him—he had been one of us.

He came out walking rapidly and was well past the hotel when I caught up with him. He stopped and looked at me patiently while I was trying to think of something to say, but I hesitated and he walked on. I kept up with him and finally suggested we might dine together. My idiotic mumble seemed to please him. He surprized me by accepting. I don't pretend I understood him. His views were not mine—yet in the end he rang true.

Graves with Seton and his wife had gone into South America on some hare-brained rumor of a lost civilization. A Philadelphia museum had sent them as a scouting party, that could move swiftly and cover the ground. If they found what they sought, an elaborate expedition could go in later, equipped to meet the conditions that existed.

Graves and Mrs. Seton had returned—alone. They brought back some story of spiders. At least Mrs. Seton did. And Graves corroborated her. Yet I knew Seton to be a reliable man, painstaking and methodical in the field. This I had learned from the museum. I had only met him twice myself. He was older than his wife and of a more quiet bearing, and there was a noticeable difference between them. There had been talk, too. Breath of scandal! But their story had been accepted by all—except the museum.

I knew Mrs. Seton was in love with Graves, or pretended to be. Since their return they had often been seen together. On one occasion as I was leaving the apartments where Graves was staying, I heard a soft rustling on the stairs—intimately feminine. There in a darkened corner of the landing she cowered, a slim figure in a clinging silken gown. Her hat shadowed her face, but could not hide its startling beauty, could not mar the brilliance of her skin, nor dim the wonderful eyes of this modern Delilah.

I paused and looked at her sharply as she took a step forward, her eyes filled with defiance, her lips parted.

"Oh!" she panted; "why don't you let us alone?"

It is with some shame that I confess her charm almost enveloped me like a magic cloud. Her beauty was wholly intoxicating. But I had thrust her away.

"You have no claim to mercy," I replied unfeelingly. "Do not count upon any." I left her pale and trembling.

I had returned to the States shortly after the collapse of the ill-fated party, and was staying at the Jefferson House. Graves dined with me there. He talked soberly, with a sort of composed unreserve and quiet bearing that might have been the outcome of manly self-control or of gigantic deception. Who could tell? He seemed of the right sort, and he had been one of us.

"We left Guayaquil," he spoke slowly in answer to my question, "and went down into the disputed territory of northern Peru. Toward the end of that semi-arid plateau which stretches for miles between two spurs of the Peruvian Andes lies a land that God forgot. High in the air it is, as men measure things—a matter of two vertical miles above the slow lift of the Pacific out beyond the sunset. Tumbled and stark, too, a dumping-ground of the Titans, a scrap-heap from which the world was made.

"Up toward this sky-top world we rode on a day as glittering and telescopically clear overhead as it was harsh and soggy underfoot, up through the green rankness of the jungle coast toward a land of illimitable space. To the condor swinging a thousand feet overhead we must have seemed like ants crawl-

ing in single file toward a rugged border.

"That night we camped in a ravine on a little grassy flat protected on two sides by the crumbling walls of the cut. We were not yet out of the jungle, and the surrounding wilderness, with its screams of winged creatures and its dank tropical odors, was in direct contrast to the country above, where the mountains swept up and up into a cap of the clouds."

Graves paused. The marble floor in the middle of the dining-room was filled with dancing couples whirling around in a flash of colors to the strains of voluptuous music emanating from among the gilt and brocades where a concealed orchestra played unceasingly. One wondered who they were and where they all came from, these expensively dressed, apparently refined though only veneered girls, whirling about with the pleasantest-looking young men who expertly guided them through the mazes of the one-step and waltz and a dozen other steps that I knew not of. All around us the atmosphere seemed vibrant with laughter and music. But it went unheeded. We were in a different world.

My companion looked at me doubtfully as he lit a cigarette. He seemed perplexed, as if he was about to make some extraordinary statement, something I could not imagine or believe.

"That night," he shot out, "occurred a strange thing.

"We had built a huge fire in the opening of our rocky shelter, that any prowling animals might be kept at bay. Beyond the fire, yellow-green spots of flame appeared, moved about restlessly, disappeared and reappeared, accompanied by hideous growls and screams as the hungry beasts and screeching night birds were attracted by the light of our campfire.

"But to such things we had become callousd. We talked unconcernedly, as we might have done in more domesticated surroundings. The fire crackled cheerily. The owners of the yellow-green eyes raised their frightful chorus to the heavens.

"Suddenly the moon, which had been shining brightly, was obscured by a cloud. Darkness enclosed us like a shroud. And then as though the hand of death had reached out and touched us, we all tensed into rigidity, being frozen by some strange species of terror or awe. Above the diapason of the teeming forest we heard a dismal flapping of wings, and overhead through the thick night a shadowy form passed across the diffused light of the flaring campfire. I felt a strange creeping sensation run over my flesh as the horrible something flapped itself across the sky. An eery wail floated down from above, and the apparition, whatever it might have been, was swallowed up by the darkness. For several minutes we heard the sounds of those dismally flapping wings lessening in the distance until they could no longer be heard.

"I glanced toward Seton, who was gazing into the darkness above. He mumbled something about a vampire bat and walked toward the tent with an air of finality. Clara was still silent, but when I turned to her I found her big eyes fixed upon me with an expression in which there was pleading, in which there was something else—something indefinable, yet strangely disturbing.

"'It is a sign,' she said, slowly, 'someone is going to die!'

"Though I don't think I am any more cowardly than the average man, I wasn't feeling any too comfortable that night. The very atmosphere seemed charged with something sinister. Secret and malign forces seemed to throb about us—forces against which we had no armor. As Clara Seton spoke, I felt as one bound upon an Aztec altar,

with the priest's obsidian knife raised above my breast.

"Vaguely I remembered seeing Clara to her own tent, and after piling more wood upon the fire, falling exhausted upon my own cot beside Seton. There are few states, I suppose, which exact so severe a toll from one's nervous system as the anticipation of calamity. And it came soon enough."

I studied the man's face attentively. He was at least candid. But it never came home to him how wholly he was caught in the spell of this woman whose real character was so inscrutable, whose beauty and charm masked the cunning of a serpent.

I watched him light a fresh cigarette and exhale a heavy swirl of smoke.

"Two days later we were in the higher altitudes," he continued. "We had not yet reached the part of the country we sought, but decided to rest here a day or so before moving on. We could, perhaps, pick an easier access to the plateau above.

"The morning of the third day Seton and his wife set out together. It was noon when Clara returned alone. Disheveled and torn, she came running toward me with a wild look in her eyes. It was patent at a glance that something had happened —something horrible. There was an ashiness in her cheeks that even her rich coat of tan could not conceal. It was the one time that I noticed, for all her amazing beauty, she was sinister! There was cruelty about her quivering mouth, in the terror of her speech—not conscious cruelty, but the more terrifying, careless cruelty of nature itself.

" 'Quick!' she gasped; 'he is being killed!'

"Her very looks and speech demanded action, and quickly procuring my automatic I prepared to follow her at once without further questioning. Clara still carried her own lightweight 30-30. She led off through the thick foliage of cane which seemed to be the particular vegetation at this altitude; off to where the side of the mountain sloped to a steep pitch that dropped far below to the valley floor; across a tangle of interlacing stems and offshoots that reached a height of three or four feet and was in some places strong enough to bear our weight.

"As I struggled along behind Clara I seemed to sense a subtle change in her attitude toward me—a new intentness, a doubt plainly tinged with apprehension. What was it? What had happened to Seton? But it was no time now to ask questions. I set down her expression of fear and bewilderment as the result of her husband being in danger.

"It was rough going. On hands and knees we could crawl along for a few yards over the tangled mass of bamboo, then strike a weak place and mash through to the ground in a smother of tangled leaves and hampering tendrils—scramble out and go on. By the time we were five hundred yards across that slope we were soaked with perspiration and nearly fagged out.

"It was nearly sunset when we reached a comparatively level stretch beyond which the mountain dropped away suddenly as though to make up for lost time. Across this place the cane was unusually thick, and it was here, a few yards short of the steep slope, that Clara, her face blanched to the hue of dirty parchment and her forehead dewed with cold perspiration, stopped and pointed.

"I reached her side and looked down into a sort of pear-shaped cave perhaps a dozen yards in diameter and about half as high. Daylight filtered through a ragged hole at our feet, pitifully weak, but enough to disclose the mingled rocks and earth that formed the walls of the enclosure and the whitish, diseased-looking vines that twined up them

to the opening. The exuding air was hot, steamy, and loaded with the smell of rotting vegetation.

"On the floor among the rocks and moldy roots lay Seton. Yet it was not this fact alone that caused me to stiffen, that almost caused my eyes to bulge from their sockets. Was it madness, this gruesome fascination that held my eyes to the bottom of that horrible pit? Was it a nightmare, these huge apparitions with loathsome heads and misshapen bodies that crawled over the body of my friend?

"Spiders! Enormous spiders! Black, with yellow stripes. Legs that fairly bristled with spines. Ugh! God, it was awful! I could see them clinging to the irregularities in the slimy walls—the most gigantic spiders I had ever set eyes upon! I tried to close my eyes—or to turn them away from the poisonous well. It was useless. I must look.

"Into that black cavern I stared—to feel my scalp tingle horrifically, to know the crowning terror of this fateful journey. The blackness was spangled with watching, glittering eyes—with tiny eyes that moved, upon the walls, upon the floor, and upon the now inert body of Seton. Over him they crawled, a veritable army of the venomous creatures; bloated, unwieldy, so great of body that their hideous, hairy legs could scarce support them.

"Their mouths dripped blood and flesh as they tore at their unfortunate victim. Already part of the body was eaten clean to the bones. What monstrosities of the insect kingdom constituted that obscene host I do not know; I only know that my skin tingled from forehead to feet, and I experienced a sensation as if a million of these unclean things clung to me. I could hear them moving, crawling, tearing, with a sort of rustling sound—a faint sibilance indescribably loathsome.

"A choking cry rose to my lips, but I was unable to utter any save mumbling sounds. With an effort I withdrew my gaze from that hellish scene as there came a low moan in my ear. Clara Seton, wrought upon past endurance, with a sobbing cry sank at my feet and lay still.

"Panic plucking at my heart, I gathered her up in my arms and stumbled from that place of gruesome horror."

Graves dropped the stub of his cigarette into his empty cup and passed his hand across his forehead as if to clear it. "I remember little of that journey back to the coast. I only know that we both were strangely silent. Our nerves were overwrought by Seton's untimely end. When we reached Guayaquil a full report was sent to the museum, explaining how he had accidentally fallen into the cave, and lying stunned had become an easy prey for the spiders before aid could be summoned."

"But," I objected, "you didn't examine the body. You should have been more thorough."

He looked at me strangely. "There are times," he said, "of which no man can recall his mental impressions, moments so acutely horrible that, mercifully, our memory retains nothing of the emotions they occasioned. The time I stood looking into that pit was one of them. Afterward in my calmer moments I realized it would have been folly. The man was unmistakably dead."

I studied him awhile. Perhaps I am somewhat of a woman-hater. Anyway I said scornfully enough: "No woman is worth that!"

Graves' eyes bored into me. He jerked himself upright. The light of comprehension seemed at last to have seeped through his brain. He darted his hand across the table, and clutching my arm, glared fixedly at me.

"You lie!" he gritted.

I saw he was sincere. I had always thought so. But I had to tell him.

He had risen to leave me, anger flaring from his eyes.

"Wait," I said, and a curious hesitation seemed to hold him. "The museum people sent me down there. They weren't satisfied with your explanation. I followed your trail to your last camp. It took me three days to find the cave—and the body. The spiders were there, but I managed to remove the body. And I found what you would have found had you recovered it. Seton was not killed by his fall or by the spiders. He had been shot through the brain with a bullet fired from a special 30-30 rifle."

For a long time Graves gazed at me. I do not know whether anyone around us noticed him. I don't think so. His face—I could never describe it, but it was as grim as death. There was some mental struggle going on within. He seemed to be conscious of many aching sensibilities. To have gone wrong and to have been set right makes a double trial for man's vanity. The realization of his own weakness and unfaith had staggered him to the heart and increased the bitterness of surprize.

Finally he stuck out his hand and said: "Thanks, old man!" Then he was gone.

The next morning I received two telegrams, one to the effect that Graves was on his way to California and the other that Clara Seton had been taken into custody.

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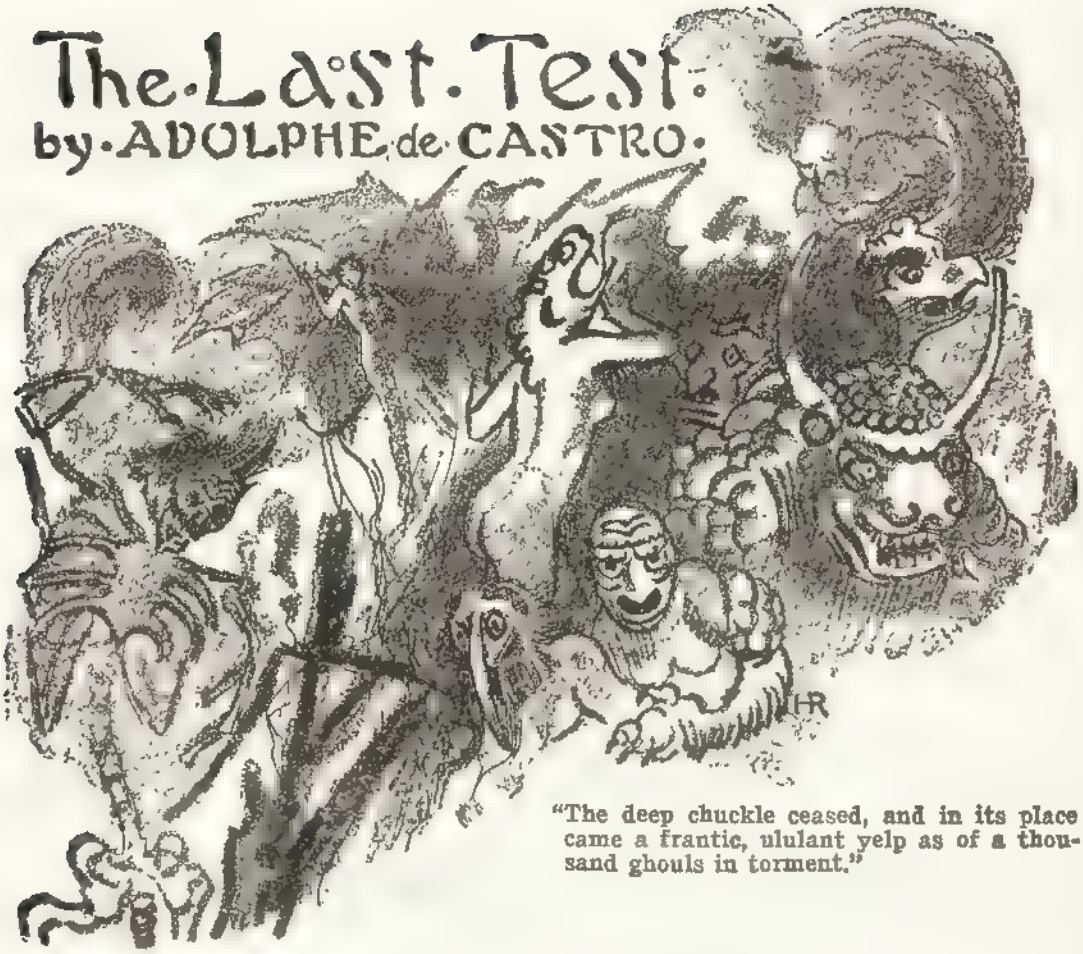
8. *The Creatures*

Vast wings were flapping in the still night air;
  I saw great shadows cross a gibbous moon;
  The mandrakes moaned along the black lagoon,
And in the sky, there hung a baleful glare.
Terror and death seemed stalking everywhere,
  And still those vast wings beat that sullen tune;
  Were they strange creatures from Outside that soon
Would seize their prey and seek their cosmic lair?

Out of the night, there came a shrill long scream,
  And through the riven air, there harshly swept
    The charnel sounds of awful slaughtering.
At first I deemed it some mad nightmare-dream,
  But from the sundered room I never crept—
    My face was eaten by a red huge *Thing*.

The Last Test

by ADOLPHE de CASTRO



"The deep chuckle ceased, and in its place came a frantic, ululant yelp as of a thousand ghouls in torment."

FEW persons know the inside of the Clarendon story, or even that there is an inside not reached by the newspapers. It was a San Francisco sensation in the days before the fire, both because of the panic and menace that kept it company, and because of its close linkage with the governor of the state. Governor Dalton, it will be recalled, was Clarendon's best friend, and later married his sister. Neither Dalton nor Mrs. Dalton would ever discuss the painful affair, but somehow the facts have leaked out to a limited circle. But for that, and for the years which have given a sort of vagueness and impersonality to the actors, one would still pause before probing into secrets so strictly guarded at the time.

The appointment of Dr. Alfred Clarendon as medical director of San Quentin Penitentiary in 189— was greeted with the keenest enthusiasm throughout California. San Francisco had at last the honor of harboring one of the greatest biologists and physicians of the period, and solid pathological leaders from all over the world might be expected to flock thither to study his methods, profit by his advice and researches,

EDITOR'S NOTE—Dr. de Castro was author with Ambrose Bierce of *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter*. (At that time he used his full name, Gustaf Adolf de Castro Danziger, which he has since shortened to his ancestral Spanish form, Adolphe de Castro.) We commend *The Last Test* to those who appreciate a truly artistic story, with its suggestions of unthinkable horrors from the elder world, which sweep through the story like a cold breeze from the tomb.

and learn how to cope with their own local problems. California, almost over night, would become a center of medical scholarship with earthwide influence and reputation.

Governor Dalton, anxious to spread the news in its fullest significance, saw to it that the press carried ample and dignified accounts of his new appointee. Pictures of Dr. Clarendon and his new home near old Goat Hill, sketches of his career and manifold honors, and popular accounts of his salient scientific discoveries were all presented in the principal California dailies, till the public soon felt a sort of reflected pride in the man whose studies of pyemia in India, of the pest in China, and of every sort of kindred disorder elsewhere would soon enrich the world of medicine with an antitoxin of revolutionary importance—a basic antitoxin combating the whole febrile principle at its very source, and ensuring the ultimate conquest and extirpation of fever in all its diverse forms.

Back of the appointment stretched an extended and not wholly unromantic history of early friendship, long separation, and dramatically renewed acquaintance. James Dalton and the Clarendon family had been friends in New York ten years before—friends and more than friends, since the doctor's only sister, Georgina, was the sweetheart of Dalton's youth, while the doctor himself had been his closest associate and almost his protegé in the days of school and college. The father of Alfred and Georgina, a Wall Street pirate of the ruthless elder breed, had known Dalton's father well; so well, indeed, that he had finally stripped him of all he possessed in a memorable afternoon's fight on the stock exchange. Dalton Senior, hopeless of recuperation and wishing to give his one adored child the benefit of his insurance, had promptly blown out his brains; but James had not sought to retaliate. It was, as he viewed it, all in the game; and he wished no harm to the father of the girl he meant to marry and of the budding young scientist whose admirer and protector he had been throughout their years of fellowship and study. Instead, he turned to the law, established himself in a small way, and in due course of time asked "Old Clarendon" for Georgina's hand.

Old Clarendon had refused very firmly and loudly, vowing that no pauper and upstart lawyer was fit to be his son-in-law; and a scene of considerable violence had occurred. James, telling the wrinkled freebooter at last what he ought to have been told long before, had left the house and the city in a high temper; and was embarked within a month upon the California life which was to lead him to the governorship through many a fight with ring and politician. His farewells to Alfred and Georgina had been brief, and he had never known the aftermath of that scene in the Clarendon library. Only by a day did he miss the news of Old Clarendon's death from apoplexy, and by so missing it, changed the course of his whole career. He had not written Georgina in the decade that followed; knowing her loyalty to her father, and waiting till his own fortune and position might remove all obstacles to the match. Nor had he sent any word to Alfred, whose calm indifference in the face of affection and hero-worship had always savored of conscious destiny and the self-sufficiency of genius. Secure in the ties of a constancy rare even then, he had worked and risen with thoughts only of the future; still a bachelor, and with a perfect intuitive faith that Georgina also was waiting.

In this faith Dalton was not deceived. Wondering perhaps why no message ever came, Georgina found no romance save in her dreams and expectations; and in the course of

time became busy with the new responsibilities brought by her brother's rise to greatness. Alfred's growth had not belied the promise of his youth, and the slim boy had darted quietly up the steps of science with a speed and permanence almost dizzying to contemplate. Lean and ascetic, with steel-rimmed pince-nez and pointed brown beard, Dr. Alfred Clarendon was an authority at twenty-five and an international figure at thirty. Careless of worldly affairs with the negligence of genius, he depended vastly on the care and management of his sister, and was secretly thankful that her memories of James had kept her from other and more tangible alliances.

GEORGINA conducted the business and household of the great bacteriologist, and was proud of his strides toward the conquest of fever. She bore patiently with his eccentricities, calmed his occasional bursts of fanaticism, and healed those breaches with his friends which now and then resulted from his unconcealed scorn of anything less than a single-minded devotion to pure truth and its progress. Clarendon was undeniably irritating at times to ordinary folk; for he never tired of depreciating the service of the individual as contrasted with the service of mankind as a whole, and in censuring men of learning who mingled domestic life or outside interests with their pursuit of abstract science. His enemies called him a bore; but his admirers, pausing before the white heat of ecstasy into which he would work himself, became almost ashamed of ever having had any standards or aspirations outside the one divine sphere of unalloyed knowledge.

The doctor's travels were extensive and Georgina generally accompanied him on the shorter ones. Three times, however, he had taken long, lone jaunts to strange and distant places in his studies of exotic fevers and half-fabulous plagues; for he knew that it is out of the unknown lands of cryptic and immemorial Asia that most of the earth's diseases spring. On each of these occasions he had brought back curious mementoes which added to the eccentricity of his home, not least among which was the needlessly large staff of eight Tibetan servants picked up somewhere in U-tsang during an epidemic of which the world never heard, but amidst which Clarendon had discovered and isolated the germ of black fever. These men, taller than most Tibetans and clearly belonging to a stock but little investigated in the outside world, were of a skeletonic leanness which made one wonder whether the doctor had sought to symbolize in them the anatomical models of his college years. Their aspect, in the loose black silk robes of Boupa priests which he chose to give them, was grotesque in the highest degree; and there was an unsmiling silence and stiffness in their motions which enhanced their air of fantasy and gave Georgina a queer, awed feeling of having stumbled into the pages of *Vathek* or the *Arabian Nights*.

But queerest of all was the general factotum or clinic-man, whom Clarendon addressed as Surama, and whom he had brought back with him after a long stay in Northern Africa, during which he had studied certain odd intermittent fevers among the mysterious Saharan Tuaregs, whose descent from the primal race of lost Atlantis is an old archeological rumor. Surama, a man of great intelligence and seemingly inexhaustible erudition, was as morbidly lean as the Tibetan servants; with swarthy, parchmentlike skin drawn so tightly over his bald pate and hairless face that every line of the skull stood out in ghastly prominence—this death's-head effect being heightened by lusterlessly burning black eyes set with a

depth which left to common visibility only a pair of dark, vacant sockets. Unlike the ideal subordinate, he seemed despite his impassive features to spend an effort in concealing such emotions as he possessed. Instead, he carried about an insidious atmosphere of irony or amusement, accompanied at certain moments by a deep, guttural chuckle like that of a giant turtle which has just torn to pieces some furry animal and is ambling away toward the sea. His race appeared to be Caucasian, but could not be classified more closely than that. Some of Clarendon's friends thought he looked like a high-caste Hindoo notwithstanding his accentless speech, while many agreed with Georgina—who disliked him—when she gave her opinion that a Pharaoh's mummy, if miraculously brought to life, would form a very apt twin for this sardonic skeleton.

Dalton, absorbed in his up-hill political battles and isolated from Eastern interests through the peculiar self-sufficiency of the old West, had not followed the meteoric rise of his former comrade; Clarendon had actually heard nothing of one so far outside his chosen world of science as the governor. Being of independent and even of abundant means, the Clarendons had for many years stuck to their old Manhattan mansion in East Nineteenth Street; whose ghosts must have looked sorely askance at the bizarrerie of Surama and the Tibetans. Then, through the doctor's wish to transfer his base of medical observation, the great change had suddenly come, and they had crossed the continent to take up a secluded life in San Francisco; buying the gloomy old Bannister place near Goat Hill, overlooking the bay, and establishing their strange household in a rambling, French-roofed relic of mid-Victorian design and gold-rush parvenu display, set amidst high-walled grounds in a region still half suburban.

Dr. Clarendon, though better satisfied than in New York, still felt cramped for lack of opportunities to apply and test his pathological theories. Unworldly as he was, he had never thought of using his reputation as an influence to gain public appointment; though more and more he realized that only the medical directorship of a government or a charitable institution—a prison, almshouse, or hospital—would give him a field of sufficient width to complete his researches and make his discoveries of the greatest use to humanity and science at large.

Then he had run into James Dalton by sheer accident one afternoon in Market Street as the governor was swinging out of the Royal Hotel. Georgina had been with him, and an almost instant recognition had heightened the drama of the reunion. Mutual ignorance of one another's progress had bred long explanations and histories, and Clarendon was pleased to find that he had so important an official for a friend. Dalton and Georgina, exchanging many a glance, felt more than a trace of their youthful tenderness; and a friendship was then and there revived which led to frequent calls and a fuller and fuller exchange of confidences.

James Dalton learned of his old protegé's need for political appointment, and sought, true to his protective rôle of school and college days, to devise some means of giving "Little Alf" the needed position and scope. He had, it is true, wide appointive powers; but the legislature's constant attacks and encroachments forced him to exercise these with the utmost discretion. At length, however, scarcely three months after the sudden reunion, the foremost institutional medical office in the state fell vacant. Weighing all the elements with care, and conscious that his friend's achievements and reputation would justify the

most substantial rewards, the governor felt at last able to act. Formalities were few, and on the 8th of November, 189—, Dr. Alfred Schuyler Clarendon became medical director of the California State Penitentiary at San Quentin.

2

In scarcely more than a month the hopes of Dr. Clarendon's admirers were amply fulfilled. Sweeping changes in methods brought to the prison's medical routine an efficiency never before dreamed of; and though the subordinates were naturally not without jealousy, they were obliged to admit the magical results of a really great man's superintendence. Then came a time when mere appreciation might well have grown to devout thankfulness at a providential conjunction of time, place, and man; for one morning Dr. Jones came to his new chief with a grave face to announce his discovery of a case which he could not but identify as that selfsame black fever whose germ Clarendon had found and classified.

Dr. Clarendon showed no surprize, but kept on at the writing before him.

"I know," he said evenly; "I came across that case yesterday. I'm glad you recognized it. Put the man in a separate ward, though I don't believe this fever is contagious."

Dr. Jones, with his own opinion of the malady's contagiousness, was glad of this deference to caution; and hastened to execute the order. Upon his return Clarendon rose to leave, declaring that he would himself take charge of the case alone. Disappointed in his wish to study the great man's methods and technique, the junior physician watched his chief stride away toward the lone ward where he had placed the patient, more critical of the new regime than at any time since admiration had displaced his first jealous pangs.

Reaching the ward, Clarendon entered hastily, glancing at the bed and stepping back to see how far Dr. Jones's obvious curiosity might have led him. Then, finding the corridor still vacant, he shut the door and turned to examine the sufferer. The man was a convict of a peculiarly repulsive type, and seemed to be racked by the keenest throes of agony. His features were frightfully contracted, and his knees drawn sharply up in the mute desperation of the stricken. Clarendon studied him closely, raising his tightly shut eyelids, took his pulse and temperature, and finally dissolving a tablet in water, forced the solution between the sufferer's lips. Before long the height of the attack abated, as shown by the relaxing body and returning normality of expression, and the patient began to breathe more easily. Then, by a soft rubbing of the ears, the doctor caused the man to open his eyes. There was life in them, for they moved from side to side, though they lacked the fine fire which we are wont to deem the image of the soul. Clarendon smiled as he surveyed the peace his help had brought, feeling behind him the power of an all-capable science. He had long known of this case, and had snatched the victim from death with the work of a moment. Another hour and this man would have gone —yet Jones had seen the symptoms for days before discovering them, and having discovered them, did not know what to do.

Man's conquest of disease, however, can not be perfect. Clarendon, assuring the dubious trusty-nurses that the fever was not contagious, had had the patient bathed, sponged in alcohol, and put to bed; but was told the next morning that the case was lost. The man had died after midnight in the most intense agony, and with such cries and distortions

of face that the nurses were driven almost to panic. The doctor took this news with his usual calm, whatever his scientific feelings may have been, and ordered the burial of the patient in quicklime. Then, with a philosophic shrug of the shoulders, he made the usual rounds of the penitentiary.

Two days later the prison was hit again. Three men came down at once this time, and there was no concealing the fact that a black fever epidemic was under way. Clarendon, having adhered so firmly to his theory of non-contagiousness, suffered a distinct loss of prestige, and was handicapped by the refusal of the trusty-nurses to attend the patients. Theirs was not the soul-free devotion of those who sacrifice themselves to science and humanity. They were convicts, serving only because of the privileges they could not otherwise buy, and when the price became too great they preferred to resign the privileges.

But the doctor was still master of the situation. Consulting with the warden and sending urgent messages to his friend the governor, he saw to it that special rewards in cash and in reduced terms were offered to the convicts for the dangerous nursing service; and by this method succeeded in getting a very fair quota of volunteers. He was steeled for action now, and nothing could shake his poise and determination. Additional cases brought only a curt nod, and he seemed a stranger to fatigue as he hastened from bedside to bedside all over the vast stone home of sadness and evil. More than forty cases developed within another week, and nurses had to be brought from the city. Clarendon went home very seldom at this stage, often sleeping on a cot in the warden's quarters, and always giving himself up with typical abandon to the service of medicine and of mankind.

Then came the first mutterings of that storm which was soon to convulse San Francisco. News will out, and the menace of black fever spread over the town like a fog from the bay. Reporters trained in the doctrine of "sensation first" used their imagination without restraint, and gloried when at last they were able to produce a case in the Mexican quarter which a local physician—fonder perhaps of money than of truth or civic welfare—pronounced black fever.

That was the last straw. Frantic at the thought of the crawling death so close upon them, the people of San Francisco went mad en masse, and embarked upon that historic exodus of which all the country was soon to hear over busy wires. Ferries and rowboats, excursion steamers and launches, railways and cable cars, bicycles and carriages, moving-vans and work carts, all were pressed into instant and frenzied service. Sausalito and Tamalpais, as lying in the direction of San Quentin, shared in the flight; while housing space in Oakland, Berkeley, and Alameda rose to fabulous prices. Tent colonies sprang up, and improvised villages lined the crowded southward highways from Millbrae to San Jose. Many sought refuge with friends in Sacramento, while the fright-shaken residue forced by various causes to stay behind could do little more than maintain the basic necessities of a nearly dead city.

Business, save for quack doctors with "sure cures" and "preventives" for use against the fever, fell rapidly to the vanishing-point. At first the saloons offered "medicated drinks," but soon found that the populace preferred to be duped by charlatans of more professional aspect. In strangely noiseless streets persons peered into one another's faces to glimpse possible plague symptoms, and shopkeepers began more and more to refuse admission to their clientele, each customer

seeming to them a fresh fever menace. Legal and judicial machinery began to disintegrate as attorneys and county clerks succumbed one by one to the urge for flight. Even the doctors deserted in large numbers, many of them pleading the need of vacations among the mountains and the lakes in the northern part of the state. Schools and colleges, theaters and cafés, restaurants and saloons, all gradually closed their doors; and in a single week San Francisco lay prostrate and inert with only its light, power, and water service even half normal, with newspapers in skeletonic form, and with a crippled parody on transportation maintained by the horse and cable cars.

This was the lowest ebb. It could not last long, for courage and observation are not altogether dead in mankind; and sooner or later the nonexistence of any widespread black fever epidemic outside San Quentin became too obvious a fact to deny, notwithstanding several actual cases and the undeniable spread of typhoid in the insanitary suburban tent colonies. The leaders and editors of the community conferred and took action, enlisting in their service the very reporters whose energies had done so much to bring on the trouble, but now turning their "sensation first" avidity into more constructive channels. Editorials and fictitious interviews appeared, telling of Dr. Clarendon's complete control of the disease, and of the absolute impossibility of its diffusion beyond the prison walls. Reiteration and circulation slowly did their work, and gradually a slim backward trickle of urbanites swelled into a vigorous refluent stream. One of the first healthy symptoms was the start of a newspaper controversy of the approved acrimonious kind, attempting to fix blame for the panic wherever the various participants thought it belonged. The returning doctors, jealously strengthened by their timely vacations, began striking at Clarendon, assuring the public that they as well as he would keep the fever in leash, and censuring him for not doing even more to check its spread within San Quentin.

Clarendon had, they averred, permitted far more deaths than were necessary. The veriest tyro in medicine knew how to check fever contagion; and if this renowned savant did not do it, it was clearly because he chose for scientific reasons to study the final effects of the disease, rather than to prescribe properly and save the victims. This policy, they insinuated, might be proper enough among convicted murderers in a penal institution, but it would not do in San Francisco, where life was still a precious and sacred thing. Thus they went on, and the papers were glad to publish all they wrote, since the sharpness of the campaign, in which Dr. Clarendon would doubtless join, would help to obliterate confusion and restore confidence among the people.

But Clarendon did not reply. He only smiled, while his singular clinicman Surama indulged in many a deep, testudinous chuckle. He was at home more nowadays, so that reporters began besieging the gate of the great wall the doctor had built around his house, instead of pestering the warden's office at San Quentin. Results, though, were equally meager; for Surama formed an impassable barrier between the doctor and the outer world—even after the reporters had got into the grounds. The newspaper men getting access to the front hall had glimpses of Clarendon's singular entourage and made the best they could in a "write-up" of Surama and the queer skeletonic Tibetans. Exaggeration, of course, occurred in every fresh article, and the net effect of the publicity was distinctly adverse to the great physician. Most persons hate the unusual, and hundreds who could have excused heartlessness or incompetence stood ready to condemn the grotesque taste manifested in the

chuckling attendant and the eight black-robed Orientals.

EARLY in January an especially persistent young man from the *Observer* climbed the moated eight-foot brick wall in the rear of the Clarendon grounds and began a survey of the varied outdoor appearances which trees concealed from the front walk. With quick, alert brain he took in everything—the rose-arbor, the aviaries, the animal cages where all sorts of mammalia from monkeys to guinea-pigs might be seen and heard, the stout wooden clinic building with barred windows in the northwest corner of the yard—and bent searching glances throughout the thousand square feet of intramural privacy. A great article was brewing, and he would have escaped unscathed but for the barking of Dick, Georgina Clarendon's gigantic and beloved St. Bernard. Surama, instant in his response, had the youth by the collar before a protest could be uttered, and was presently shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat, and dragging him through the trees to the front yard and the gate.

Breathless explanations and quavering demands to see Dr. Clarendon were useless. Surama only chuckled and dragged his victim on. Suddenly a positive fright crept over the dapper scribe, and he began to wish desperately that this unearthly creature would speak, if only to prove that he really was a being of honest flesh and blood belonging to this planet. He became deathly sick, and strove not to glimpse the eyes which he knew must lie at the base of those gaping black sockets. Soon he heard the gate open and felt himself propelled violently through; in another moment waking rudely to the things of earth as he landed wetly and muddily in the ditch which Clarendon had had dug around the entire length of the wall. Fright gave place to rage as he heard the massive gate slam shut, and he rose dripping to shake his fist at the forbidding portal. Then, as he turned to go, a soft sound grated behind him, and through a small wicket in the gate he felt the sunken eyes of Surama and heard the echoes of a deep-voiced, blood-freezing chuckle.

This young man, feeling perhaps justly that his handling had been rougher than he deserved, resolved to revenge himself upon the household responsible for his treatment. Accordingly he prepared a fictitious interview with Dr. Clarendon, supposed to be held in the clinic building, during which he was careful to describe the agonies of a dozen black fever patients whom his imagination ranged on orderly rows of couches. His master-stroke was the picture of one especially pathetic sufferer gasping for water, while the doctor held a glass of the sparkling fluid just out of his reach, in a scientific attempt to determine the effect of a tantalizing emotion on the course of the disease. This invention was followed by paragraphs of insinuating comment so outwardly respectful that it bore a double venom. Dr. Clarendon was, the article ran, undoubtedly the greatest and most single-minded scientist in the world; but science is no friend to individual welfare, and one would not like to have one's gravest ills drawn out and aggravated merely to satisfy an investigator on some point of abstract truth. Life is too short for that.

Altogether, the article was diabolically skilful, and succeeded in horrifying nine readers out of ten against Dr. Clarendon and his supposed methods. Other papers were quick to copy and enlarge upon its substance, taking the cue it offered, and commencing a series of "faked" interviews which fairly ran the gamut of derogatory fantasy. In no case, however, did the doctor condescend to offer a contradiction. He had no time to waste on fools and liars, and cared little for the esteem of a thoughtless rabble he

despised. When James Dalton telegraphed his regrets and offered aid, Clarendon replied with an almost boorish curtness. He did not heed the barking of dogs, and could not bother to muzzle them. Nor would he thank anyone for messing with a matter wholly beneath notice. Silent and contemptuous, he continued his duties with tranquil evenness.

But the young reporter's spark had done its work. San Francisco was insane again, and this time as much with rage as with fear. Sober judgment became a lost art; and though no second exodus occurred, there ensued a reign of vice and recklessness born of desperation, and suggesting parallel phenomena in mediæval times of pestilence. Hatred ran riot against the man who had found the disease and was struggling to restrain it, and a light-headed public forgot his great services to knowledge in their efforts to fan the flames of resentment. They seemed, in their blindness, to hate him in person, rather than the plague which had come to their breeze-cleaned and usually healthy city.

Then the young reporter, playing in the Neronic fire he had kindled, added a crowning personal touch of his own. Remembering the indignities he had suffered at the hands of the cadaverous clinic-man, he prepared a masterly article on the home and environment of Dr. Clarendon, giving especial prominence to Surama, whose very aspect he declared sufficient to scare the healthiest person into any sort of fever. He tried to make the gaunt chuckler appear equally ridiculous and terrible, succeeding best, perhaps, in the latter half of his intention, since a tide of horror always welled up whenever he thought of his brief proximity to the creature. He collected all the rumors current about the man, elaborated on the unholy depth of his reputed scholarship, and hinted darkly that it could have been no godly realm of secret and eon-weighted Africa wherein Dr. Clarendon had found him.

Georgina, who followed the papers closely, felt crushed and hurt by these attacks upon her brother, but James Dalton, who called often at the house, did his best to comfort her. In this he was warm and sincere; for he wished not only to console the woman he loved, but to utter some measure of the reverence he had always felt for the starward-bound genius who had been his youth's closest comrade. He told Georgina how greatness can never be exempted from the shafts of envy, and cited the long, sad list of splendid brains crushed beneath vulgar heels. The attacks, he pointed out, formed the truest of all proofs of Alfred's solid eminence.

"But they hurt just the same," she rejoined, "and all the more because I know that Al really suffers from them, no matter how indifferent he tries to be."

Dalton kissed her hand in a manner not then obsolete among well-born persons.

"And it hurts me a thousand times more, knowing that it hurts you and Alf. But never mind, Georgie, we'll stand together and pull through it!"

THUS it came about that Georgina came more and more to rely on the strength of the steel-firm, square-jawed governor who had been her youthful swain, and more and more to confide in him the things she feared. The press attacks and the epidemic were not quite all. There were aspects of the household which she did not like. Surama, cruel in equal measure to man and beast, filled her with the most unnamable repulsion; and she could not but feel that he meant some vague, indefinable harm to Alfred. She did not like the Tibetans, either, and thought it very peculiar that Surama was able to talk with them. Alfred would not tell her who or what Surama was, but had

once explained rather haltingly that he was a much older man than would be commonly thought credible, and that he had mastered secrets and been through experiences calculated to make him a colleague of phenomenal value for any scientist seeking nature's hidden mysteries.

Urged by her uneasiness, Dalton became a still more frequent visitor at the Clarendon home, though he saw that his presence was deeply resented by Surama. The bony clinic-man formed the habit of glaring peculiarly from those spectral sockets when admitting him, and would often, after closing the gate when he left, chuckle monotonously in a manner that made his flesh creep. Meanwhile Dr. Clarendon seemed oblivious of everything save his work at San Quentin, whither he went each day in his launch—alone save for Surama, who managed the wheel while the doctor read or collated his notes. Dalton welcomed these regular absences, for they gave him constant opportunities to renew his suit for Georgina's hand. When he would overstay and meet Alfred, however, the latter's greeting was always friendly despite his habitual reserve. In time the engagement of James and Georgina grew to be a definite thing, and the two awaited only a favorable chance to speak to Alfred.

The governor, whole-souled in everything and firm in his protective loyalty, spared no pains in spreading propaganda on his old friend's behalf. Press and officialdom both felt his influence, and he even succeeded in interesting scientists in the East, many of whom came to California to study the plague and investigate the anti-fever bacillus which Clarendon was so rapidly isolating and perfecting. These doctors and biologists, however, did not obtain the information they wished; so that several of them left with a very unfortunate impression. Not a few prepared articles hostile to Clarendon, accusing him of an unscientific and fame-seeking attitude, and intimating that he concealed his methods through a highly unprofessional desire for ultimate personal profit.

Others, fortunately, were more liberal in their judgments, and wrote enthusiastically of Clarendon and his work. They had seen the patients, and could appreciate how marvelously he held the dread disease in leash. His secrecy regarding the antitoxin they deemed quite justifiable, since its public diffusion in unperfected form could not but do more harm than good. Clarendon himself, whom many of their number had met before, impressed them more profoundly than ever, and they did not hesitate to compare him with Jenner, Lister, Koch, Pasteur, Metchnikoff, and the rest of those whose whole lives have served pathology and humanity. Dalton was careful to save for Alfred all the magazines that spoke well of him, often bringing them in person as an excuse to see Georgina. They did not, however, produce much effect save a contemptuous smile; and Clarendon would generally throw them to Surama, whose deep, disturbing chuckle upon reading formed a close parallel to the doctor's own ironic amusement.

One Monday evening early in February Dalton called with the definite intention of asking Clarendon for his sister's hand. Georgina herself admitted him to the grounds, and as they walked toward the house he stopped to pat the great dog which rushed up and laid friendly forepaws on his breast. It was Dick, Georgina's cherished St. Bernard, and Dalton was glad to feel that he had the affection of a creature which meant so much to her.

Dick was excited and glad, and turned the governor nearly half about with his vigorous pressure as he gave a soft quick bark and sprang off through the trees toward the clinic. He did not vanish, though, but pres-

ently stopped and looked back, softly barking again as if he wished Dalton to follow. Georgina, fond of obeying her huge pet's playful whims, motioned to James to see what he wanted; and they both walked slowly after him as he trotted relievedly to the rear of the yard where the top of the clinic building stood silhouetted against the stars above the great brick wall.

The outline of lights within showed around the edges of the dark window-curtains, so they knew that Alfred and Surama were at work. Suddenly from the interior came a thin, subdued sound like a cry of a child—a plaintive call of "Mamma! Mamma!" at which Dick barked, while James and Georgina started perceptibly. Then Georgina smiled, remembering the parrots that Clarendon always kept for experimental uses, and patted Dick on the head either to forgive him for having fooled her and Dalton, or to console him for having been fooled himself.

As they turned slowly toward the house Dalton mentioned his resolve to speak to Alfred that evening about their engagement, and Georgina supplied no objection. She knew that her brother would not relish the loss of a faithful manager and companion, but believed his affection would place no barrier in the way of her happiness.

Later that evening Clarendon came into the house with a springy step and aspect less grim than usual. Dalton, seeing a good omen in this easy buoyancy, took heart as the doctor wrung his hand with a jovial "Ah, Jimmy, how's politics this year?" He glanced at Georgina, and she quietly excused herself, while the two men settled down to a chat on general subjects. Little by little, amidst many reminders of their old youthful days, Dalton worked toward his point; till at last he came out plainly with the crucial query.

"Alf, I want to marry Georgina. Have we your blessing?"

Keenly watching his old friend, Dalton saw a shadow steal over his face. The dark eyes flashed for a moment, then veiled themselves as wonted placidity returned. So science or selfishness was at work after all!

"You're asking an impossibility, James. Georgina isn't the aimless butterfly she was years ago. She has a place in the service of truth and mankind now, and that place is here. She's decided to devote her life to my work—to the household that makes my work possible—and there's no room for desertion or personal caprice."

Dalton waited to see if he had finished. The same old fanaticism—humanity versus the individual—and the doctor was going to let it spoil his sister's life! Then he tried to answer.

"But look here, Alf, do you mean to say that Georgina, in particular, is so necessary to your work that you must make a slave and martyr of her? Use your sense of proportion, man! If it were a question of Surama or somebody in the utter thick of your experiments it might be different; but after all, Georgina is only a housekeeper to you in the last analysis. She has promised to be my wife and says that she loves me. Have you the right to cut her off from the life that belongs to her? Have you the right——"

"That'll do, James!" Clarendon's face was set and white. "Whether or not I have the right to govern my own family is no business of an outsider."

"Outsider—you can say that to a man who——" Dalton almost choked as the steely voice of the doctor interrupted him again.

"An outsider to my family, and from now on an outsider to my home. Dalton, your presumption goes just a little too far! Good evening, Governor!"

And Clarendon strode from the room without extending his hand.

Dalton hesitated for a moment, almost at a loss what to do, when presently Georgina entered. Her face showed that she had spoken with her brother, and Dalton took both her hands impetuously.

"Well, Georgie, what do you say? I'm afraid it's a choice between Alf and me. You know how I feel—you know how I felt before, when it was your father I was up against. What's your answer this time?"

He paused as she responded slowly.

"James, dear, do you believe that I love you?"

He nodded and pressed her hands expectantly.

"Then, if you love me, you'll wait a while. Don't think of Al's rudeness. He's to be pitied. I can't tell you the whole thing now, but you know how worried I am—what with the strain of his work, the criticisms, and the staring and cackling of that horrible creature Surama! I'm afraid he'll break down—he shows the strain more than anyone outside the family could tell. I can see it, for I've watched him all my life. He's changing—slowly bending under his burdens—and he puts on his extra bruskness to hide it. You can see what I mean, can't you, dear?"

She paused, and Dalton nodded again, pressing one of her hands to his breast. Then she concluded.

"So promise me, dear, to be patient. I must stand by him; I must! I must!"

Dalton did not speak for a while, but his head inclined in what was almost a bow of reverence. There was more of Christ in this devoted woman than he had thought any human being possessed; and in the face of such love and loyalty he could do no urging.

Words of sadness and parting were brief; and James, whose blue eyes were misty, scarcely saw the gaunt clinic-man as the gate to the street was at last opened to him. But when it slammed to behind him he heard that blood-curdling chuckle he had come to recognize so well, and knew that Surama was there — Surama, whom Georgina had called her brother's evil genius. Walking away with a firm step, Dalton resolved to be watchful, and to act at the first sign of trouble.

3

MEANWHILE San Francisco, the epidemic still on the lips of all, seethed with anti-Clarendon feeling. Actually the cases outside the penitentiary were very few, and confined almost wholly to the lower Mexican element whose lack of sanitation was a standing invitation to disease of every kind; but politicians and the people needed no more than this to confirm the attacks made by the doctor's enemies. Seeing that Dalton was immovable in his championship of Clarendon, the malcontents, medical dogmatists, and ward-heelers turned their attention to the state legislature; lining up the anti-Clarendonists and the governor's old enemies with great shrewdness, and preparing to launch a law—with a veto-proof majority—transferring the authority for minor institutional appointments from the chief executive to the various boards or commissions concerned.

In the furtherance of this measure no lobbyist was more active than Clarendon's chief assistant, Dr. Jones. Jealous of his superior from the first, he now saw an opportunity for turning matters to his liking; and he thanked fate for the circumstance—responsible indeed for his present position—of his relationship to the chairman of the prison board. The new law, if passed, would certainly mean the removal of Clarendon and the appointment of himself in his stead; so, mindful of his own interest, he worked hard for it. Jones was all that Clarendon was not—a natural politician and sycophantic oppor-

tunist who served his own advancement first and science only incidentally. He was poor, and avid for salaried position, quite in contrast to the wealthy and independent savant he sought to displace. So with a rat-like cunning and persistence he labored to undermine the great biologist above him, and was one day rewarded by the news that the new law was passed. Thenceforward the governor was powerless to make appointments to the state institutions, and the medical directorship of San Quentin lay at the disposal of the prison board.

Of all this legislative turmoil Clarendon was singularly oblivious. Wrapped wholly in matters of administration and research, he was blind to the treason of "that ass Jones" who worked by his side, and deaf to all the gossip of the warden's office. He had never in his life read the newspapers, and the banishment of Dalton from his house cut off his last real link with the world of outside events. With the naïveté of a recluse, he at no time thought of his position as insecure. In view of Dalton's loyalty, and of his forgiveness of even the greatest wrongs, as shown in his dealings with the elder Clarendon who had crushed his father to death on the stock exchange, the possibility of a gubernatorial dismissal was, of course, out of the question; nor could the doctor's political ignorance envisage a sudden shift of power which might place the matter of retention or dismissal in very different hands. Thereupon he merely smiled with satisfaction when Dalton left for Sacramento; convinced that his place in San Quentin and his sister's place in his household were alike secure from disturbance. He was accustomed to having what he wanted, and fancied his luck was still holding out.

The first week in March, a day or so after the enactment of the new law, the chairman of the prison board called at San Quentin. Clarendon was out, but Dr. Jones was glad to show the august visitor—his own uncle, incidentally—through the great infirmary, including the fever ward made so famous by press and panic. By this time converted against his will to Clarendon's belief in the fever's non-contagiousness, Jones smilingly assured his uncle that nothing was to be feared, and encouraged him to inspect the patients in detail—especially a ghastly skeleton, once a very giant of bulk and vigor, who was, he insinuated, slowly and painfully dying because Clarendon would not administer the proper medicine.

"Do you mean to say," cried the chairman, "that Dr. Clarendon refuses to let the man have what he needs, knowing his life could be saved?"

"Just that," snapped Dr. Jones, pausing as the door opened to admit none other than Clarendon himself. Clarendon nodded coldly to Jones and surveyed the visitor, whom he did not know, with disapproval.

"Dr. Jones, I thought you knew this case was not to be disturbed at all. And haven't I said that visitors aren't to be admitted except by special permission?"

But the chairman interrupted before his nephew could introduce him.

"Pardon me, Dr. Clarendon, but am I to understand that you refuse to give this man the medicine that would save him?"

Clarendon glared coldly, and rejoined with steel in his voice.

"That's an impertinent question, sir. I am in authority here, and visitors are not allowed. Please leave the room at once."

The chairman, his sense of drama secretly tickled, answered with greater pomp and hauteur than were necessary.

"You mistake me, sir! I, not you, am master here. You are addressing the chairman of the prison board. I

must say, moreover, that I deem your activity a menace to the welfare of the prisoners, and must request your resignation. Henceforth Dr. Jones will be in charge, and if you wish to remain until your formal dismissal you will take your orders from him."

It was Wilfred Jones's great moment. Life never gave him another such climax, and we need not grudge him this one. After all he was a small rather than a bad man, and he had only obeyed a small man's code of looking to himself at all costs. Clarendon stood still, gazing at the speaker as if he thought him mad, till in another second the look of triumph on Dr. Jones's face convinced him that something important was indeed afoot. He was icily courteous as he replied.

"No doubt you are what you claim to be, sir. But fortunately my appointment came from the governor of the state, and can therefore be revoked only by him."

The chairman and his nephew both stared perplexedly, for they had not realized to what lengths unworldly ignorance can go. Then the older man, grasping the situation, explained at some length.

"Had I found that the current reports did you an injustice," he concluded, "I would have deferred action; but the case of this poor man and your own arrogant manner left me no choice. As it is——"

But Dr. Clarendon interrupted with a new razor-sharpness in his voice.

"As it is, I am the director in charge at present, and I ask you to leave this room at once."

The chairman reddened and exploded.

"Look here, sir, who do you think you're talking to? I'll have you chucked out of here—damn your impertinence!"

But he had time only to finish the sentence. Transformed by the insult to a sudden dynamo of hate, the slender scientist launched out with both fists in a burst of preternatural strength of which no one would have thought him capable. And if his strength was preternatural, his accuracy of aim was no less so; for not even a champion of the ring could have wrought a neater result. Both men—the chairman and Dr. Jones—were squarely hit; the one full in the face and the other on the point of the chin. Going down like felled trees, they lay motionless and unconscious on the floor; while Clarendon, now clear and completely master of himself, took his hat and cane and went out to join Surama in the launch. Only when seated in the moving boat did he at last give audible vent to the frightful rage that consumed him. Then, with face convulsed, he called down imprecations from the stars and the gulfs beyond the stars; so that even Surama shuddered, made an elder sign that no book of history records, and forgot to chuckle.

4

GEORGINA soothed her brother's hurt as best she could. He had come home mentally and physically exhausted and thrown himself on the library lounge; and in that gloomy room, little by little, the faithful sister had taken in the almost incredible news. Her consolations were instantaneous and tender, and she made him realize how vast, though unconscious, a tribute to his greatness the attacks, persecution, and dismissal all were. He had tried to cultivate the indifference she preached, and could have done so had personal dignity alone been involved. But the loss of scientific opportunity was more than he could calmly bear, and he sighed again and again as he repeated how three months more of study in the prison might have given him at last the long-sought bacillus which would make all fever a thing of the past.

Then Georgina tried another mode of cheering, and told him that surely the prison board would send for him again if the fever did not abate, or if it broke out with increased force. But even this was ineffective, and Clarendon answered only in a string of bitter, ironic, and half-meaningless little sentences whose tone showed all too clearly how deeply despair and resentment had bitten.

"Abate? Break out again? Oh, it'll abate all right! At least, they'll think it has abated. They'd think anything, no matter what happens! Ignorant eyes see nothing, and bunglers are never discoverers. Science never shows her face to that sort. And they call themselves doctors! Best of all, fancy that ass Jones in charge!"

Ceasing with a quick sneer, he laughed so demoniacally that Georgina shivered.

The days that followed were dismal ones indeed at the Clarendon mansion. Depression, stark and unrelieved, had taken hold of the doctor's usually tireless mind; and he would even have refused food had not Georgina forced it upon him. His great notebook of observations lay unopened on the library table, and his little gold syringe of anti-fever serum—a clever device of his own, with a self-contained reservoir, attached to a broad gold finger ring, and single-pressure action peculiar to itself—rested idly in a small leather case beside it. Vigor, ambition, and the desire for study and observation seemed to have died within him; and he made no inquiries about his clinic, where hundreds of germ cultures stood in their orderly phials awaiting his attention.

The countless animals held for experiments played, lively and well-fed, in the early spring sunshine; and as Georgina strolled out through the rose-arbor to the cages she felt a strangely incongruous sense of happiness about her. She knew, though, how tragically transient that happiness must be; since the start of new work would soon make all these small creatures unwilling martyrs to science. Knowing this, she glimpsed a sort of compensating element in her brother's inaction, and encouraged him to keep on in a rest he needed so badly. The eight Tibetan servants moved noiselessly about, each as impeccably effective as usual; and Georgina saw to it that the order of the household did not suffer because of the master's relaxation.

Study and starward ambition laid aside in slippered and dressing-gowned indifference, Clarendon was content to let Georgina treat him as an infant. He met her maternal fussiness with a slow, sad smile, and always obeyed her multitude of orders and precepts. A kind of faint, wistful felicity came over the languid household, amidst which the only dissenting note was supplied by Surama. He indeed was miserable, and looked often with sullen and resentful eyes at the sunny serenity in Georgina's face. His only joy had been the turmoil of experiment, and he missed the routine of seizing the fated animals, bearing them to the clinic in clutching talons, and watching them with hot brooding gaze and evil chuckles as they gradually fell into the final coma with wide-opened, red-rimmed eyes, and swollen tongue lolling from froth-covered mouth.

Now he was seemingly driven to desperation by the sight of the carefree creatures in their cages, and frequently came to ask Clarendon if there were any orders. Finding the doctor apathetic and unwilling to begin work, he would go away muttering under his breath and glaring curses upon everything; stealing with catlike tread to his own quarters in the basement, where his voice would sometimes ascend in deep, muffled rhythms of blasphemous strangeness and uncomfortably ritualistic suggestion.

All this wore on Georgina's nerves, but not by any means so gravely as her brother's continued lassitude itself. The duration of the state alarmed her, and little by little she lost the air of cheerfulness which had so provoked the clinic-man. Herself skilled in medicine, she found the doctor's condition highly unsatisfactory from an alienist's point of view; and she now feared as much from his absence of interest and activity as she had formerly feared from his fanatical zeal and overstudy. Was lingering melancholy about to turn the once brilliant man of intellect into an innocuous imbecile?

THEN, toward the end of May, came the sudden change. Georgina always recalled the smallest details connected with it; details as trivial as the box delivered to Surama the day before, postmarked Algiers, and emitting a most unpleasant odor; and the sharp, sudden thunderstorm, rare in the extreme for California, which sprang up that night as Surama chanted his rituals behind his locked basement door in a droning chest-voice louder and more intense than usual.

It was a sunny day, and she had been in the garden gathering flowers for the dining-room. Re-entering the house, she glimpsed her brother in the library, fully dressed and seated at the table, alternately consulting the notes in his thick observation book, and making fresh entries with brisk assured strokes of the pen. He was alert and vital, and there was a satisfying resilience about his movements as he now and then turned a page, or reached for a book from the rear of the great table. Delighted and relieved, Georgina hastened to deposit her flowers in the dining-room and return; but when she reached the library again she found that her brother was gone.

She knew, of course, that he must be in the clinic at work, and rejoiced to think that his old mind and purpose had snapped back into place. Realizing it would be of no use to delay the luncheon for him, she ate alone and set aside a bite to be kept warm in case of his return at an odd moment. But he did not come. He was making up for lost time, and was still in the great, stout-planked clinic when she went for a stroll through the rose-arbor.

As she walked among the fragrant blossoms she saw Surama fetching animals for the test. She wished she could notice him less, for he always made her shudder; but her very dread had sharpened her eyes and ears where he was concerned. He always went hatless around the yard, and the total hairlessness of his head enhanced his skeletonlike aspect horribly. Now she heard a faint chuckle as he took a small monkey from its cage against the wall and carried it to the clinic, his long, bony fingers pressing so cruelly into its furry sides that it cried out in frightened anguish. The sight sickened her, and brought her walk to an end. Her inmost soul rebelled at the ascendancy this creature had gained over her brother, and she reflected bitterly that the two had almost changed places as master and servant.

Night came without Clarendon's return to the house, and Georgina concluded that he was absorbed in one of his very longest sessions, which meant total disregard of time. She hated to retire without a talk with him about his sudden recovery; but finally, feeling it would be futile to wait up, she wrote a cheerful note and propped it before his chair on the library table; then started resolutely for bed.

She was not quite asleep when she heard the outer door open and shut. So it had not been an all-night session after all! Determined to see that her brother had a meal before retiring, she rose, slipped on a robe, and descended to the library, halting only when she heard voices from behind

the half-opened door. Clarendon and Surama were talking, and she waited till the clinic-man might go.

Surama, however, showed no inclination to depart; and indeed, the whole heated tenor of the discourse seemed to bespeak absorption and promise length. Georgina, though she had not meant to listen, could not help catching a phrase now and then, and presently became aware of a sinister undercurrent which frightened her very much without being wholly clear to her. Her brother's voice, nervous, incisive, held her notice with disquieting persistence.

"But anyway," he was saying, "we haven't enough animals for another day, and you know how hard it is to get a decent supply at short notice. It seems silly to waste so much effort on comparative trash when human specimens could be had with just a little extra care."

Georgina sickened at the possible implication, and caught at the hall rack to steady herself. Surama was replying in that deep, hollow tone which seemed to echo with the evil of a thousand ages and a thousand planets.

"Steady, steady—what a child you are with your haste and impatience! You crowd things so! When you've lived as I have, so that a whole life will seem only an hour, you won't be so fretful about a day or week or month! You work too fast. You've plenty of specimens in the cages for a full week if you'll only go at a sensible rate. You might even begin on the other material if you'd be sure not to overdo it."

"Never mind my haste!" the reply was snapped out sharply; "I have my own methods. I don't want to use our material if I can help it, for I prefer them as they are. And you'd better be careful of them anyway—you know the knives those sly dogs carry."

Surama's deep chuckle came.

"Don't worry about that. The brutes eat, don't they? Well, I can get you one any time you need it. But go slow—with the boy gone, there are only eight, and now that you've lost San Quentin it'll be hard to get new ones by the wholesale. I'd advise you to start in on Tsanpo—he's the least use to you as he is, and——"

But that was all Georgina heard. Transfixed by a hideous dread from the thoughts this talk excited, she nearly sank to the floor where she stood, and was scarcely able to drag herself up the stairs and into her room. What was the evil monster Surama planning? Into what was he guiding her brother? What monstrous circumstances lay behind these cryptic sentences? A thousand phantoms of darkness and menace danced before her eyes, and she flung herself upon the bed without hope of sleep. One thought above the rest stood out with fiendish prominence, and she almost screamed aloud as it beat itself into her brain with renewed force. Then nature, kinder than she expected, intervened at last. Closing her eyes in a dead faint, she did not awake till morning, nor did any fresh nightmare come to join the lasting one which the overheard words had brought.

With the morning sunshine came a lessening of the tension. What happens in the night when one is tired often reaches the consciousness in distorted forms, and Georgina could see that her brain must have given strange color to scraps of common medical conversation. To suppose her brother—only son of the gentle Frances Schuyler Clarendon—guilty of savage sacrifices in the name of science would be to do an injustice to their blood, and she decided to omit all mention of her trip downstairs, lest Alfred ridicule her fantastic notions.

When she reached the breakfast table she found that Clarendon was already gone, and regretted that not even this second morning had given her a chance to congratulate him on his re-

vived activity. Quietly taking the breakfast served by stone-deaf old Margarita, the Mexican cook, she read the morning paper and seated herself with some needlework by the sitting-room window overlooking the great yard. All was silent out there, and she could see that the last of the animal cages had been emptied. Science was served, and the lime pit held all that was left of the once pretty and lively little creatures. This slaughter had always grieved her, but she had never complained, since she knew it was all for humanity. Being a scientist's sister, she used to say to herself, was like being the sister of a soldier who kills to save his countrymen from their foes.

After luncheon Georgina resumed her post by the window, and had been busily sewing for some time when the sound of a pistol shot from the yard caused her to look out in alarm. There, not far from the clinic, she saw the ghastly form of Surama, a revolver in his hand, and his skull-face twisted into a strange expression as he chuckled at a cowering figure robed in black silk and carrying a long Tibetan knife. It was the servant Tsanpo, and as she recognized the shriveled face, Georgina remembered horribly what she had overheard the night before. The sun flashed on the polished blade, and suddenly Surama's revolver spat once more. This time the knife flew from the Mongol's hand, and Surama glanced greedily at his shaking and bewildered prey.

Then Tsanpo, glancing quickly at his unhurt hand and at the fallen knife, sprang nimbly away from the stealthily approaching clinic-man and made a dash for the house. Surama, however, was too swift for him, and caught him in a single leap, seizing his shoulder and almost crushing him. For a moment the Tibetan tried to struggle, but Surama lifted him like an animal by the scruff of the neck and bore him off toward the clinic. Georgina heard him chuckling and taunting the man in his own tongue, and saw the yellow face of the victim twist and quiver with fright. Suddenly realizing against her own will what was taking place, a great horror mastered her and she fainted for the second time within twenty-four hours.

When consciousness returned, the golden light of late afternoon was flooding the room. Georgina, picking up her fallen work-basket and scattered materials, was lost in a daze of doubt; but finally felt convinced that the scene which had overcome her must have been all too tragically real. Her worst fears, then, were horrible truths. What to do about it, nothing in her experience could tell her; and she was vaguely thankful that her brother did not appear. She must talk to him, but not now. She could not talk to anybody now. And thinking shudderingly of the monstrous happening behind those barred clinic windows, she crept into bed for a long night of anguished sleeplessness.

RISING haggardly on the following day, Georgina saw the doctor for the first time since his recovery. He was bustling about preoccupiedly, circulating between the house and the clinic, and paying little attention to anything besides his work. There was no chance for the dreaded interview, and Clarendon did not even notice his sister's worn-out aspect and hesitant manner.

In the evening she heard him in the library, talking to himself in a fashion most unusual for him, and she felt that he was under a great strain which might culminate in the return of his apathy. Entering the room, she tried to calm him without referring to any trying subject, and forced a steadying cup of bouillon upon him. Finally she asked gently what was distressing him, and waited anxiously for his reply, hoping to hear that Surama's treatment of the poor Tibetan had horrified and outraged him.

There was a note of fretfulness in his voice as he responded.

"What's distressing me? Good God, Georgina, what *isn't?* Look at the cages and see if you have to ask again! Cleaned out—milked dry—not a cursed specimen left; and a line of the most important bacterial cultures incubating in their tubes without a chance to do an ounce of good! Days' work wasted—whole program set back—it's enough to drive a man mad! How shall I ever get anywhere if I can't scrape up some decent subjects?"

Georgina stroked his forehead.

"I think you ought to rest a while, Al dear."

He moved away.

"Rest? That's good! That's damn good! What else have I been doing but resting and vegetating and staring blankly into space for the last fifty or a hundred or a thousand years? Just as I manage to shake off the clouds, I have to run short of material—and then I'm told to lapse back again into drooling stupefaction! God! And all the while some sneaking thief is probably working with my data and getting ready to come out ahead of me with the credit for my own work. I'll lose by a neck—some fool with the proper specimens will get the prize, when one week more with even half-adequate facilities would see me through with flying colors!"

His voice rose querulously, and there was an overtone of mental strain which Georgina did not like. She answered softly, yet not so softly as to hint at the soothing of a psychopathic case.

"But you're killing yourself with this worry and tension, and if you're dead, how can you do your work?"

He gave a smile that was almost a sneer.

"I guess a week or a month—all the time I need—wouldn't quite finish me, and it doesn't much matter what becomes of me or any other individual in the end. Science is what must be served—science—the austere cause of human knowledge. I'm like the monkeys and birds and guinea-pigs I use—just a cog in the machine, to be used to the advantage of the whole. They had to be killed—I may have to be killed—what of it? Isn't the cause we serve worth that and more?"

Georgina sighed. For a moment she wondered whether, after all, this ceaseless round of slaughter really was worth while.

"But are you absolutely sure your discovery will be enough of a boon to humanity to warant these sacrifices?"

Clarendon's eyes flashed dangerously.

"Humanity! What the deuce is humanity? Science! Dolts! Just individuals over and over again! Humanity is made for preachers to whom it means the blindly credulous. Humanity is made for the predatory rich to whom it speaks in terms of dollars and cents. Humanity is made for the politician to whom it signifies collective power to be used to his advantage. What is humanity? Nothing! Thank God that crude illusion doesn't last! What a grown man worships is truth—knowledge—science—light—the rending of the veil and the pushing back of the shadow. Knowledge, the juggernaut! There is death in our own ritual. We must kill—dissect—destroy—and all for the sake of discovery—the worship of the ineffable light. The goddess Science demands it. We test a doubtful poison by killing. How else? No thought for self—just knowledge—the effect must be known."

His voice trailed off in a kind of temporary exhaustion, and Georgina shuddered slightly.

"But this is horrible, Al! You shouldn't think of it that way!"

Clarendon cackled sardonically, in a manner which stirred odd and repugnant associations in his sister's mind.

"Horrible? You think what *I* say is horrible? You ought to hear Surama! I tell you, things were known to the priests of Atlantis that would make you drop dead of fright if you heard a hint of them. Knowledge was knowledge a hundred thousand years ago, when our especial forebears were shambling about Asia as speechless semi-apes! They know something of it in the Hoggar region—there are rumors in the farther uplands of Tibet—and once I heard an old man in China calling on Yog-Sothoth——"

He turned pale, and made a curious sign in the air with his extended forefinger. Georgina felt genuinely alarmed, but became somewhat calmer as his speech took a less fantastic form.

"Yes, it may be horrible, but it's glorious, too. The pursuit of knowledge, I mean. Certainly, there's no slovenly sentiment connected with it. Doesn't nature kill—constantly and remorselessly—and are any but fools horrified at the struggle? Killings are necessary. They are the glory of science. We learn something from them, and we can't sacrifice learning to sentiment. Hear the sentimentalists howl against vaccination! They fear it will kill the child. Well, what if it does? How else can we discover the laws of disease concerned? As a scientist's sister you ought to know better than to prate sentiment. You ought to help my work instead of hindering it!"

"But Al," protested Georgina, "I haven't the slightest intention of hindering your work. Haven't I always tried to help as much as I could? I am ignorant, I suppose, and can't help very actively; but at least I'm proud of you—proud for my own sake and for the family's sake—and I've always tried to smooth the way. You've given me credit for that many a time."

Clarendon looked at her keenly.

"Yes," he said jerkily as he rose and strode from the room, "you're right. You've always tried to help as best you knew. You may yet have a chance to help still more."

Georgina, seeing him disappear through the front door, followed him into the yard. Some distance away a lantern was shining through the trees, and as they approached it they saw Surama bending over a large object stretched on the ground. Clarendon, advancing, gave a short grunt; but when Georgina saw what it was she rushed up with a shriek. It was Dick, the great St. Bernard, and he was lying still with reddened eyes and protruding tongue.

"He's sick, Al!" she cried. "Do something for him, quick!"

The doctor looked at Surama, who had uttered something in a tongue unknown to Georgina.

"Take him to the clinic," he ordered; "I'm afraid Dick's caught the fever."

Surama took up the dog as he had taken poor Tsanpo the day before, and carried him silently to the building near the mall. He did not chuckle this time, but glanced at Clarendon with what appeared to be real anxiety. It almost seemed to Georgina that Surama was asking the doctor to save her pet.

Clarendon, however, made no move to follow, but stood still for a moment and then sauntered slowly toward the house. Georgina, astonished at such callousness, kept up a running fire of entreaties on Dick's behalf, but it was of no use. Without paying the slightest attention to her pleas he made directly for the library and began to read in a large old book which had lain face down on the table. She put her hand on his shoulder as he sat there, but he did not speak or turn his head. He only kept on reading, and Georgina, glancing curiously over his shoulder, wondered in what strange alphabet this brass-bound tome was written.

In the cavernous parlor across the hall, sitting alone in the dark a quarter of an hour later, Georgina came to her decision. Something was gravely wrong—just what, and to what extent, she scarcely dared formulate to herself—and it was time that she called in some stronger force to help her. Of course it must be James. He was powerful and capable, and his sympathy and affection would show him the right thing to do. He had known Al always, and would understand.

It was by this time rather late, but Georgina had resolved on action. Across the hall the light still shone from the library, and she looked wistfully at the doorway as she quietly donned a hat and left the house. Outside the gloomy mansion and forbidding grounds, it was only a short walk to Jackson Street, where by good luck she found a carriage to take her to the Western Union telegraph office. There she carefully wrote out a message to James Dalton in Sacramento, asking him to come at once to San Francisco on a matter of the greatest importance to them all.

5

DALTON was frankly perplexed by Georgina's sudden message. He had had no word from the Clarendons since that stormy February evening when Alfred had declared him an outsider to his home; and he in turn had studiously refrained from communicating, even when he had longed to express sympathy after the doctor's summary ousting from office. He had fought hard to frustrate the politicians and keep the appointive power, and was bitterly sorry to watch the unseating of a man who, despite recent estrangements, still represented to him the ultimate ideal of scientific competence.

Now, with this clearly frightened summons before him, he could not imagine what had happened. He knew, though, that Georgina was not one to lose her head or send forth a needless alarm; hence he wasted no time, but took the Overland which left Sacramento within the hour, going at once to his club and sending word to Georgina by a messenger that he was in town and wholly at her service.

Meanwhile things had been quiescent at the Clarendon home, notwithstanding the doctor's continued taciturnity and his absolute refusal to report on the dog's condition. Shadows of evil seemed omnipresent and thickening, but for the moment there was a lull. Georgina was relieved to get Dalton's message and learn that he was close at hand, and sent back word that she would call him when necessity arose. Amidst all the gathering tension some faint compensating element seemed manifest, and Georgina finally decided that it was the absence of the lean Tibetans, whose stealthy, sinuous ways and disturbing exotic aspect had always annoyed her. They had vanished all at once; and old Margarita, the sole visible servant left in the house, told her they were helping their master and Surama at the clinic.

The following morning—the 28th of May—long to be remembered—was dark and lowering, and Georgina felt the precarious calm wearing thin. She did not see her brother at all, but knew he was in the clinic hard at work at something despite the lack of specimens he had bewailed. She wondered how poor Tsanpo was getting along, and whether he had really been subjected to any serious inoculation, but it must be confessed that she wondered more about Dick. She longed to know whether Surama had done anything for the faithful dog amidst his master's oddly callous indifference. Surama's apparent solicitude on the night of Dick's seizure had impressed her greatly, giving her per-

haps the kindliest feeling she had ever had for the detested clinic-man. Now, as the day advanced, she found herself thinking more and more of Dick; till at last her harassed nerves, finding in this one detail a sort of symbolic summation of the whole horror that lay upon the household, could stand the suspense no longer.

Up to that time she had always respected Alfred's imperious wish that he be never approached or disturbed at the clinic; but as this fateful afternoon advanced, her resolution to break through the barrier grew stronger and stronger. Finally she set out with determined face, crossing the yard and entering the unlocked vestibule of the forbidden structure with the fixed intention of discovering how the dog was or of knowing the reason for her brother's secrecy.

The inner door, as usual, was locked; and behind it she heard voices in heated conversation. When her knocking brought no response she rattled the knob as loudly as possible, but still the voices argued on unheeding. They belonged, of course, to Surama and her brother; and as she stood there trying to attract attention she could not help catch something of their drift. Fate had made her for the second time an eavesdropper, and once more the matter she overheard seemed likely to tax her mental poise and nervous endurance to their ultimate bounds. Alfred and Surama were plainly quarreling with increasing violence, and the purport of their speech was enough to arouse the wildest fears and confirm the gravest apprehensions. Georgina shivered as her brother's voice mounted shrilly to dangerous heights of fanatical tension.

"You, damn you—you're a fine one to talk defeat and moderation to me! Who started all this, anyway? Did *I* have any idea of your cursed devil-gods and elder world? Did *I* ever in my life think of your damned spaces beyond the stars and your crawling chaos Nyarlathotep? I was a normal scientific man, confound you, till I was fool enough to drag you out of the vaults with your devilish Atlantean secrets. You egged me on, and now you want to cut me off! You loaf around doing nothing and telling me to go slow when you might just as well as not be going out and getting material. You know damn well that I don't know how to go about such things, whereas you must have been an old hand at it before the earth was made. It's like you, you damned walking corpse, to start something you won't or can't finish!"

Surama's evil chuckle came.

"You're insane, Clarendon. That's the only reason I let you rave on when I could send you to hell in three minutes. Enough is enough, and you've certainly had enough material for any novice at your stage. You've had all I'm going to get you, anyhow! You're only a maniac on the subject now—what a cheap, crazy thing to sacrifice even your poor sister's pet dog, when you could have spared him as well as not! You can't look at any living thing now without wanting to jab that gold syringe into it. No—Dick had to go where the Mexican boy went—where Tsanpo and the other seven went—where all the animals went! What a pupil! You're no fun any more—you've lost your nerve. You set out to control things, and they're controlling you. I'm about done with you, Clarendon. I thought you had the stuff in you, but you haven't. It's about time I tried somebody else. I'm afraid you'll have to go!"

In the doctor's shouted reply there was both fear and frenzy.

"Be careful, you ———! There are powers against your powers—I didn't go to China for nothing, and there are things in Alhazred's *Azif* which weren't known in At-

lantis! We've both meddled in dangerous things, but you needn't think you know all my resources. How about the Nemesis of Flame? I talked in Yemen with an old man who had come back alive from the Crimson Desert—he had seen Irem, the City of Pillars, and had worshiped at the underground shrines of Nug and Yeb—Ia! Shub-Niggurath!"

Through Clarendon's shrieking falsetto cut the deep chuckle of the clinic-man.

"Shut up, you fool! Do you suppose your grotesque nonsense has any weight with me? Words and formulæ — words and formulæ — what do they all mean to one who has the substance behind them? We're in a material sphere now, and subject to material laws. You have your fever; I have my revolver. You'll get no specimens, and I'll get no fever so long as I have you in front of me with this gun between!"

That was all Georgina could hear. She felt her senses reeling, and staggered out of the vestibule for a saving breath of the lowering outside air. She saw that the crisis had come at last, and that help must now arrive quickly if her brother was to be saved from unknown gulfs of madness and mystery. Summoning up all her reserve energy, she managed to reach the house and get to the library, where she scrawled a hasty note for Margarita to take to James Dalton.

When the old woman had gone, Georgina had just strength enough to cross to the lounge and sink weakly down into a sort of semi-stupor. There she lay for what seemed like years, conscious only of the fantastic creeping up of the twilight from the lower corners of the great, dismal room, and plagued by a thousand shadowy shapes of terror which filed with fantasmal, half-limned pageantry through her tortured and stifled brain. Dusk deepened into darkness, and still the spell held. Then a firm tread sounded in the hall, and she heard someone enter the room and fumble at the match-safe. Her heart almost stopped beating as the gas-jets of the chandelier flared up one by one, but then she saw that the arrival was her brother. Relieved to the bottom of her heart that he was still alive, she gave vent to an involuntary sigh, profound, long-drawn, and tremulous, and lapsed at last into kindly oblivion.

At the sound of that sigh Clarendon turned in alarm toward the lounge, and was inexpressibly shocked to see the pale and unconscious form of his sister there. Her face had a deathlike quality that frightened his inmost spirit, and he flung himself on his knees by her side, awake to a realization of what her passing away would mean to him. Long unused to private practise amidst his ceaseless quest for truth, he had lost the physician's instinct of first aid, and could only call out her name and chafe her wrists mechanically as fear and grief possessed him. Then he thought of water, and ran to the dining-room for a carafe. Stumbling about in a darkness which seemed to harbor vague terrors, he was some time in finding what he sought; but at last he clutched it in shaking hand and hastened back to dash the cold fluid in Georgina's face. The method was crude but effective. She stirred, sighed a second time, and finally opened her eyes.

"You are alive!" he cried, and put his cheek to hers as she stroked his head maternally. She was almost glad she had fainted, for the circumstance seemed to have dispelled the strange Alfred and brought her own brother back to her. She sat up slowly and tried to reassure him.

"I'm all right, Al. Just give me a glass of water. It's a sin to waste it this way—to say nothing of spoil-

ing my waist! Is that the way to behave every time your sister drops off for a nap? You needn't think I'm going to be sick, for I haven't time for such nonsense!"

Alfred's eyes showed that her cool, common-sense speech had had its effect. His brotherly panic dissolved in an instant, and instead there came into his face a vague, calculating expression, as if some marvelous possibility had just dawned upon him. As she watched the subtle waves of cunning and appraisal pass fleetingly over his countenance she became less and less certain that her mode of reassurance had been a wise one, and before he spoke she found herself shivering at something she could not define. A keen medical instinct almost told her that his moment of sanity had passed, and that he was now once more the unrestrained fanatic for scientific research. There was something morbid in the quick narrowing of his eyes at her casual mention of good health. What was he thinking? To what unnatural extreme was his passion for experiment about to be pushed? Wherein lay the special significance of her pure blood and absolutely flawless organic state? None of these misgivings, however, troubled Georgina for more than a second, and she was quite natural and unsuspicious as she felt her brother's steady fingers at her pulse.

"You're a bit feverish, Georgie," he said in a precise, elaborately restrained voice as he looked professionally into her eyes.

"Why, nonsense, I'm all right," she replied. "One would think you were on the watch for fever patients just for the sake of showing off your discovery! It *would* be poetic, though, if you could make your final proof and demonstration by curing your own sister!"

Clarendon started violently and guiltily. Had she suspected his wish? Had he muttered anything aloud? He looked at her closely, and saw that she had no inkling of the truth. She smiled up sweetly into his face and patted his hand as he stood by the side of the lounge. Then he took a small oblong leather case from his vest pocket, and taking out a little gold syringe, he began fingering it thoughtfully, pushing the piston speculatively in and out of the empty cylinder.

"I wonder," he began with suave sententiousness, "whether you would really be willing to help science in —something like that way—if the need arose? Whether you would have the devotion to offer yourself to the cause of medicine as a sort of Jephthah's daughter if you knew it meant the absolute perfection and completion of my work?"

Georgina, catching the odd and unmistakable glitter in her brother's eyes, knew at last that her worst fears were true. There was nothing to do now but keep him quiet at all hazards and to pray that Margarita had found James Dalton at his club.

"You look tired, Al dear," she said gently. "Why not take a little morphia and get some of the sleep you need so badly?"

He replied with a kind of crafty deliberation.

"Yes, you're right. I'm worn out, and so are you. Each of us needs a good sleep. Morphine is just the thing—wait till I go and fill the syringe and we'll both take a proper dose."

Still fingering the empty syringe, he walked softly out of the room. Georgina looked about her with the aimlessness of desperation, ears alert for any sign of possible help. She thought she heard Margarita again in the basement kitchen, and rose to ring the bell, in an effort to learn of the fate of her message. The old servant answered her summons at once, and declared she had given the message at the club hours ago. Governor Dalton had been out, but

the clerk had promised to deliver the note at the very moment of his arrival.

Margarita waddled below stairs again, but still Clarendon did not reappear. What was he doing? What was he planning? She had heard the outer door slam, so knew he must be at the clinic. Had he forgotten his original intention with the vacillating mind of madness? The suspense grew almost unbearable, and Georgina had to keep her teeth clenched tightly to avoid screaming.

It was the gate bell, which rang simultaneously in house and clinic, that broke the tension at last. She heard the catlike tread of Surama on the walk as he left the clinic to answer it; and then, with an almost hysterical sigh of relief, she caught the firm, familiar accents of Dalton in conversation with the sinister attendant. Rising, she almost tottered to meet him as he loomed up in the library doorway; and for a moment no word was spoken while he kissed her hand in his courtly, old-school fashion. Then Georgina burst forth into a torrent of hurried explanation, telling all that had happened, all she had glimpsed and overheard, and all she feared and suspected.

Dalton listened gravely and comprehendingly, his first bewilderment gradually giving place to astonishment, sympathy, and resolution. The message, held by a careless clerk, had been slightly delayed, and had found him appropriately enough in the midst of a warm lounging-room discussion about Clarendon. A fellow-member, Dr. MacNeil, had brought in a medical journal with an article well calculated to disturb the devoted scientist, and Dalton had just asked to keep the paper for future reference when the message was handed him at last. Abandoning his half-formed plan to take Dr. MacNeil into his confidence regarding Alfred, he called at once for his hat and stick, and lost not a moment in getting a cab for the Clarendon home.

Surama, he thought, appeared alarmed at recognizing him; though he had chuckled as usual when striding off again toward the clinic. Dalton always recalled Surama's stride and chuckle on this ominous night, for he was never to see the unearthly creature again. As the chuckler entered the clinic vestibule his deep, guttural gurgles seemed to blend with some low mutterings of thunder which troubled the far horizon.

When Dalton had heard all Georgina had to say, and learned that Alfred was expected back at any moment with an hypodermic dose of morphine, he decided he had better talk with the doctor alone. Advising Georgina to retire to her room and await developments, he walked about the gloomy library, scanning the shelves and listening for Clarendon's nervous footstep on the clinic path outside. The vast room's corners were dismal despite the chandelier, and the closer Dalton looked at his friend's choice of books the less he liked them. It was not the balanced collection of a normal physician, biologist, or man of general culture. There were too many volumes on doubtful borderland themes; dark speculations and forbidden rituals of the Middle Ages, and strange exotic mysteries in alien alphabets both known and unknown.

The great notebook of observations on the table was unwholesome, too. The handwriting had a neurotic cast, and the spirit of the entries was far from reassuring. Long passages were inscribed in crabbed Greek characters, and as Dalton marshaled his linguistic memory for their translation he gave a sudden start, and wished his college struggles with Xenophon and Homer had been more conscientious. There was

something wrong — something hideously wrong—here, and the governor sank limply into the chair by the table as he pored more and more closely over the doctor's barbarous Greek. Then a sound came, startlingly near, and he jumped nervously at a hand laid sharply on his shoulder.

"What, may I ask, is the cause of this intrusion? You might have stated your business to Surama."

Clarendon was standing icily by the chair, the little gold syringe in one hand. He seemed very calm and rational, and Dalton fancied for a moment that Georgina must have exaggerated his condition. How, too, could a rusty scholar be absolutely sure about these Greek entries? The governor decided to be very cautious in his interview, and thanked the lucky chance which had placed a specious pretext in his coat pocket. He was very cool and assured as he rose to reply.

"I didn't think you'd care to have things dragged before a subordinate, but I thought you ought to see this article at once."

He drew forth the magazine given him by Dr. MacNeil and handed it to Clarendon.

"On page 542—you see the heading, 'Black Fever Conquered by New Serum.' It's by Dr. Miller of Philadelphia—and he thinks he's got ahead of you with your cure. They were discussing it at the club, and MacNeil thought the exposition very convincing. I, as a layman, couldn't pretend to judge; but at all events I thought you oughtn't to miss a chance to digest the thing while it's fresh. If you're busy, of course, I won't disturb you——"

Clarendon cut in sharply.

"I'm going to give my sister an hypodermic—she's not quite well—but I'll look at what that quack has to say when I get back. I know Miller—a damn sneak and incompetent—and I don't believe he has the brains to steal my methods from the little he's seen of them."

Dalton suddenly felt a wave of intuition warning him that Georgina must not receive that intended dose. There was something sinister about it. From what she had said, Alfred must have been an inordinately long time preparing it, far longer than was needed for the dissolving of a morphine tablet. He decided to hold his host as long as possible, meanwhile testing his attitude in a more or less subtle way.

"I'm sorry Georgina isn't well. Are you sure that the injection will do her good? That it won't do her any harm?"

Clarendon's spasmodic start showed that something had been struck home.

"Do her harm?" he cried. "Don't be absurd! You know Georgina must be in the best of health—the very best, I say—in order to serve science as a Clarendon should serve it. She, at least, appreciates the fact that she is my sister. She deems no sacrifice too great in my service. She is a priestess of truth and discovery, as I am a priest."

He paused in his shrill tirade, wild-eyed, and somewhat out of breath. Dalton could see that his attention had been momentarily shifted.

"But let me see what this cursed quack has to say," he continued. "If he thinks his pseudo-medical rhetoric can take a real doctor in, he is even simpler than I thought!"

Clarendon nervously found the right page and began reading as he stood there clutching his syringe. Dalton wondered what the real facts were. MacNeil had assured him that the author was a pathologist of the highest standing, and that whatever errors the article might have, the mind behind it was powerful, erudite, and absolutely honorable and sincere.

WATCHING the doctor as he read, Dalton saw the thin, bearded face suddenly grow pale. The great eyes blazed, and the pages crackled in the tenser grip of the long, lean fingers. A perspiration broke out on the high, ivory-white forehead where the hair was already thinning, and the reader sank gaspingly into the chair his visitor had vacated as he kept on with his devouring of the text. Then came a wild scream as from a hunted beast, and Clarendon lurched forward on the table, his outflung arms sweeping books and papers before them as consciousness went dark like a wind-quenched candle-flame.

Dalton, springing to help his stricken friend, raised the slim form and tilted it back in the chair. Seeing the carafe on the floor near the lounge, he dashed some water into the twisted face, and was rewarded by seeing the large eyes slowly open. They were sane eyes now—deep and sad and unmistakably sane—and Dalton felt awed in the presence of a tragedy whose ultimate depth he could never hope or dare to plumb.

The golden hypodermic was still clutched in the lean left hand, and as Clarendon drew a deep, shuddering breath he unclosed his fingers and studied the glittering thing that rolled about on his palm. Then he spoke—slowly, and with the ineffable sadness of utter, absolute despair.

"Thanks, Jimmy, I'm quite all right. But there's much to be done. You asked me a while back if this shot of morphia would do Georgie any harm. I'm in a position now to tell you that it won't."

He turned a small screw in the syringe and laid a finger on the piston, at the same time pulling with his left hand at the skin of his own neck. Dalton cried out in alarm as a lightning motion of his right hand injected the contents of the cylinder into the ridge of distended flesh.

"Good Lord, Al, what have you done?"

Clarendon smiled gently—a smile almost of peace and resignation, different indeed from the sardonic sneer of the past few weeks.

"You ought to know, Jimmy, if you've still the judgment that made you a governor. You must have pieced together enough from my notes to realize that there's nothing else to do. With your marks in Greek back at Columbia I guess you couldn't have missed much. All I can say is that it's true.

"James, I don't like to pass blame along, but it's only right to tell you that Surama got me into this. I can't tell you who or what he is, for I don't fully know myself, and what I do know is stuff that no sane person ought to know; but I will say that I don't consider him a human being in the fullest sense, and that I'm not sure whether or not he's alive as we know life.

"You think I'm talking nonsense. I wish I were, but the whole hideous mess is damnably real. I started out in life with a clean mind and purpose. I wanted to rid the world of fever. I tried and failed—and I wish to God I had been honest enough to say that I'd failed. Don't let my old talk of science deceive you, James—*I found no antitoxin and was never even half on the track of one!*

"Don't look so shaken up, old fellow! A veteran politician-fighter like you must have seen plenty of unmaskings before. I tell you, I never had even the start of a fever cure. But my studies had taken me into some queer places, and it was just my damned luck to listen to the stories of some still queerer people. James, if you ever wish any man well, tell him to keep clear of the ancient, hidden places of the earth. Old backwaters are dangerous—things are handed down there that don't do healthy people any good. I talked too much with old priests and mystics, and got to hoping I might

achieve things in dark ways that I couldn't achieve in lawful ways.

"I shan't tell you just what I mean, for if I did I'd be as bad as the old priests that were the ruin of me. All I need say is that after what I've learned I shudder at the thought of the world and what it's been through. The world is cursed old, James, and there have been whole chapters lived and closed before the dawn of our organic life and the geologic eras connected with it. It's an awful thought—whole forgotten cycles of evolution with beings and races and wisdom and diseases—all lived through and gone before the first ameba ever stirred in the tropic seas geology tells us about.

"I said gone, but I didn't quite mean that. It would have been better that way, but it wasn't quite so. In places traditions have kept on—I can't tell you how—and certain archaic life-forms have managed to struggle thinly down the eons in hidden spots. There were cults, you know—bands of evil priests in lands now buried under the sea. Atlantis was the hotbed. That was a terrible place. If heaven is merciful, no one will ever drag up that horror from the deep.

"It had a colony, though, that didn't sink; and when you get too confidential with one of the Tuareg priests in Africa, he's likely to tell you wild tales about it—tales that connect up with whispers you'll hear among the mad lamas and flighty yak-drivers on the secret table-lands of Asia. I'd heard all the common tales and whispers when I came on the big one. What that was, you'll never know—but it pertained to somebody or something that had come down from a blasphemously long time ago, and could be made to live again—or seem alive again—through certain processes that weren't very clear to the man who told me.

"Now, James, in spite of my confession about the fever, you know I'm not bad as a doctor. I plugged hard at medicine, and soaked up about as much as the next man—maybe a little more, because down there in the Hoggar country I did something no priest had ever been able to do. They led me blindfolded to a place that had been sealed up for generations—and I came back with Surama.

"Easy, James! I know what you want to say. How does he know all he knows?—why does he speak English—or any other language, for that matter—without an accent?—why did he come away with me?—and all that. I can't tell you altogether, but I can say that he takes in ideas and images and impressions with something besides his brain and senses. He had a use for me and my science. He told me things, and opened up vistas. He taught me to worship ancient, primordial, and unholy gods, and mapped out a road to a terrible goal which I can't even hint to you. Don't press me, James—it's for the sake of your sanity and the world's sanity!

"The creature is beyond all bounds. He's in league with the stars and all the forces of nature. Don't think I'm still crazy, James—I swear to you I'm not! I've had too many glimpses to doubt. He gave me new pleasures that were forms of his palesgean worship, and the greatest of those was the black fever.

"God, James! Haven't you seen through the business by this time? Do you still believe the black fever came out of Tibet, and that I learned about it there? Use your brains, man! Look at Miller's article here! He's found a basic antitoxin that will end all fever within half a century, when other men learn how to modify it for the different forms. He's cut the ground of my youth from under me—done what I'd have given my life to do—taken the wind out of all the honest sails I ever flung to the breeze of science! Do you wonder

his article gave me a turn? Do you wonder it shocks me out of my madness back to the old dreams of my youth? Too late! Too late! But not too late to save others!

"I GUESS I'm rambling a bit now, old man. You know—the hypodermic. I asked you why you didn't tumble to the facts about black fever. How could you, though? Doesn't Miller say he's cured seven cases with his serum? A matter of diagnosis, James. He only thinks it is black fever. I can read between his lines. Here, old chap, on page 551, is the key to the whole thing. Read it again.

"You see, don't you? The fever cases *from the Pacific Coast* didn't respond to his serum. They puzzled him. They didn't even seem like any true fever he knew. Well, those were *my* cases! Those were the *real* black fever cases. And there can't ever be an antitoxin on earth that'll cure black fever!

"How do I know? *Because black fever isn't of this earth!* It's from *somewhere else,* James—and Surama alone knows where, because he brought it here. *He brought it and I spread it!* That's the secret, James! That's all I wanted the appointment for—*that's all I ever did—just spread the fever that I carried in this gold syringe and in the deadlier finger-ring-pump-syringe you see on my index finger!* Science? A blind! I wanted to kill, and kill, and kill! A single pressure of my finger, and the black fever was inoculated. I wanted to see living things writhe and squirm, scream and froth at the mouth. A single pressure of the pump-syringe and I could watch them as they died, and I couldn't live or think unless I had plenty to watch. That's why I jabbed everything in sight with the accursed hollow needle. Animals, criminals, children, servants—and the next would have been——"

Clarendon's voice broke, and he crumpled up perceptibly in his chair.

"That—that, James—was—my life. Surama made it so—he taught me, and kept me at it till I couldn't stop. Then—then it got too much *even for him.* He tried to check me. Fancy—*he* trying to check anybody in that line! But now I've got my last specimen. This is my last test. Good subject, James—I'm healthy—devilish healthy. Deuced ironic, though—the madness has gone now, so there won't be any fun watching the agony! Can't be—can't——"

A violent shiver of fever racked the doctor, and Dalton mourned amidst his horror-stupefaction that he could give no grief. How much of Alfred's story was sheer nonsense, and how much nightmare truth he could not say; but in any case he felt that the man was a victim rather than a criminal, and above all, he was a boyhood comrade and Georgina's brother. Thought of the old days came back kaleidoscopically. "Little Alf"—the yard at Phillips Exeter—the quadrangle at Columbia—the fight with Tom Cortland when he saved Alf from a pommeling. . . .

He helped Clarendon to the lounge and asked gently what he could do. There was nothing. Alfred could only whisper now, but he asked forgiveness for all his offenses, and commended his sister to the care of his friend.

"You—you'll—make her happy," he gasped. "She deserves it. Martyr—to—a myth! Make it up to her, James. Don't — let — her — know — more—than she has to!"

His voice trailed off in a mumble, and he fell into a stupor. Dalton rang the bell, but Margarita had gone to bed, so he called up the stairs for Georgina. She was firm of step, but very pale. Alfred's scream had tried her sorely, but she had trusted James. She trusted him still as he showed her the unconscious form on the lounge and asked her to go back to

her room and rest, no matter what sounds she might hear. He did not wish her to witness the awful spectacle of delirium certain to come, but bade her kiss her brother a final farewell as he lay there calm and still, very like the delicate boy he had once been. So she left him—the strange, moonstruck, star-reading genius she had mothered so long—and the picture she carried away was a very merciful one.

Dalton must bear to his grave a sterner picture. His fears of delirium were not vain, and all through the black midnight hours his giant strength restrained the frenzied contortions of the mad sufferer. What he heard from those swollen, blackening lips he will never repeat. He has never been quite the same man since, and he knows that no one who hears such things can ever be wholly as he was before. So, for the world's good, he dares not speak, and he thanks God that his layman's ignorance of certain subjects makes many of the revelations cryptic and meaningless to him.

TOWARD morning Clarendon suddenly woke to a sane consciousness and began to speak in a firm voice.

"James, I didn't tell you what must be done—about everything. Blot out these entries in Greek and send my notebook to Dr. Miller. All my other notes, too, that you'll find in the files. He's the big authority today—his article proves it. Your friend at the club was right.

"But everything in the clinic must go. *Everything without exception, dead or alive or—otherwise.* All the plagues of hell are in those bottles on the shelves. Burn them—burn it all—if one thing escapes, Surama will spread black death throughout the world. *And above all burn Surama!* That—that *thing*—must not breathe the wholesome air of heaven. You know now—what I told you—you know why such an entity can't be allowed on earth. It won't be murder—Surama isn't human—if you're as pious as you used to be, James, I shan't have to urge you. Remember the old text—'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live'—or something of the sort.

"*Burn him, James!* Don't let him chuckle again over the torture of mortal flesh! I say, *burn him*—the Nemesis of Flame—that's all that can reach him, James, unless you can catch him asleep and drive a stake through his heart. . . . *Kill him—extirpate him—cleanse the decent universe of its primal taint—the taint I recalled from its age-long sleep . . . .*"

The doctor had risen on his elbow, and his voice was a piercing shriek toward the last. The effort was too much, however, and he lapsed very suddenly into a deep, tranquil coma. Dalton, himself fearless of fever since he knew the dread germ to be non-contagious, composed Alfred's arms and legs on the lounge and threw a light afghan over the fragile form. After all, mightn't much of this horror be exaggeration and delirium? Mightn't old Doc MacNeil pull him through on a long chance? The governor strove to keep awake, and walked briskly up and down the room, but his energies had been taxed too deeply for such measures. A second's rest in the chair by the table took matters out of his hands, and he was presently sleeping soundly despite his best intentions.

Dalton started up as a fierce light shone in his eyes, and for a moment he thought the dawn had come. But it was not the dawn, and as he rubbed his heavy lids he saw that it was the glare of the burning clinic in the yard, whose stout planks flamed and roared and crackled heavenward in the most stupendous holocaust he had ever seen. It was indeed the "Nemesis of Flame" that Clarendon had wished, and Dalton felt that some strange combustibles must be involved in a blaze so much wilder than

anything normal pine or redwood could afford. He glanced alarmedly at the lounge, but Alfred was not there. Starting up, he went to call Georgina, but met her in the hall, roused as he was by the mountain of living fire.

"The clinic's burning down!" she cried. "How is Al now?"

"He's disappeared — disappeared while I dropped asleep!" replied Dalton, reaching out a steadying arm to the form which faintness had begun to sway.

Gently leading her upstairs toward her room, he promised to search at once for Alfred, but Georgina slowly shook her head as the flames from outside cast a weird glow through the window on the landing.

"He must be dead, James—he could never live, sane and knowing what he did. I heard him quarreling with Surama, and know that awful things were going on. He is my brother, but—it is best as it is."

Her voice had sunk to a whisper.

Suddenly through the open window came the sound of a deep, hideous chuckle, and the flames of the burning clinic took fresh contours till they half resembled some nameless, cyclopean creatures of nightmare. James and Georgina paused hesitant, and peered out breathlessly through the landing window. Then from the sky came a quick, thunderous peal, as a forked bolt of lightning shot down with terrible directness into the very midst of the blazing ruin. The deep chuckle ceased, and in its place came a frantic, ululant yelp as of a thousand ghouls and werewolves in torment. It died away with long, reverberant echoes, and slowly the flames resumed their normal shape.

The watchers did not move, but waited till the pillar of fire had shrunk to a smoldering glow. They were glad of a half-rusticity which had kept the firemen from trooping out, and of the wall which excluded the curious. What had happened was not for vulgar eyes—it involved too much of the universe's inner secrets for that.

In the pale dawn, James spoke softly to Georgina, who could do no more than put her head on his breast and sob.

"Sweetheart, I think he has atoned. He must have set the fire, you know, while I was asleep. He told me it ought to be burned—the clinic, and everything in it, Surama, too. It was the only way to save the world from the unknown horrors he had loosed upon it. He knew, and he did what was best.

"He was a great man, Georgie. Let's never forget that. We must always be proud of him, for he started out to help mankind, and was titanic even in his sins. I'll tell you more sometime. What he did, be it good or evil, was what no man ever did before. He was the first and last to break through certain veils, and even Apollonius of Tyana takes second place beside him. But we mustn't talk about that. We must remember him only as the Little Alf we knew—as the boy who wanted to master medicine and conquer fever."

In the afternoon the leisurely firemen overhauled the ruins and found two skeletons with bits of blackened flesh adhering—only two, thanks to the undisturbed lime-pits. One was of a man; the other is still a subject of debate among the biologists of the coast. It was not exactly an ape's or a saurian's skeleton, but it had disturbing suggestions of lines of evolution of which paleontology has revealed no trace. The charred skull, oddly enough, was very human, and reminded people of Surama; but the rest of the bones were beyond conjecture. Only well-cut clothing could have made such a body look like a man.

But the human bones were Clarendon's. No one disputed this, and the world at large still mourns the untimely death of the greatest doctor of his age; the bacteriologist whose universal fever serum would have far eclipsed Dr. Miller's kindred antitoxin had he lived to bring it to perfection. Much of Miller's late success, indeed, is credited to the notes bequeathed him by the hapless victim of the flames. Of the old rivalry and hatred almost none survived, and even Dr. Wilfred Jones has been known to boast of his association with the vanished leader.

James Dalton and his wife Georgina have always preserved a reticence which modesty and family grief might well account for. They published certain notes as a tribute to the great man's memory, but have never confirmed or contradicted either the popular estimate or the rare hints of marvels that a very few keen thinkers have been known to whisper. It is very subtly and slowly that the facts have filtered out. Dalton probably gave Dr. MacNeil an inkling of the truth, and that good soul had not many secrets from his son.

The Daltons have led, on the whole, a very happy life; for their cloud of terror lies far in the background, and a strong mutual love has kept the world fresh for them. But there are things which disturb them oddly—little things, of which one would scarcely ever think of complaining. They can not bear persons who are lean or deep-voiced beyond certain limits, and Georgina turns pale at the sound of any guttural chuckling. Senator Dalton has a mixed horror of occultism, travel, hypodermics, and strange alphabets which most find hard to unify, and there are still those who blame him for the vast proportion of the doctor's library that he destroyed with such painstaking completeness.

MacNeil, though, seemed to realize. He was a simple man, and he said a prayer as the last of Alfred Clarendon's strange books crumbled to ashes. Nor would anyone who had peered understandingly within those books wish a word of that prayer unsaid.

Satan and Lilith*

By GEORGE STERLING

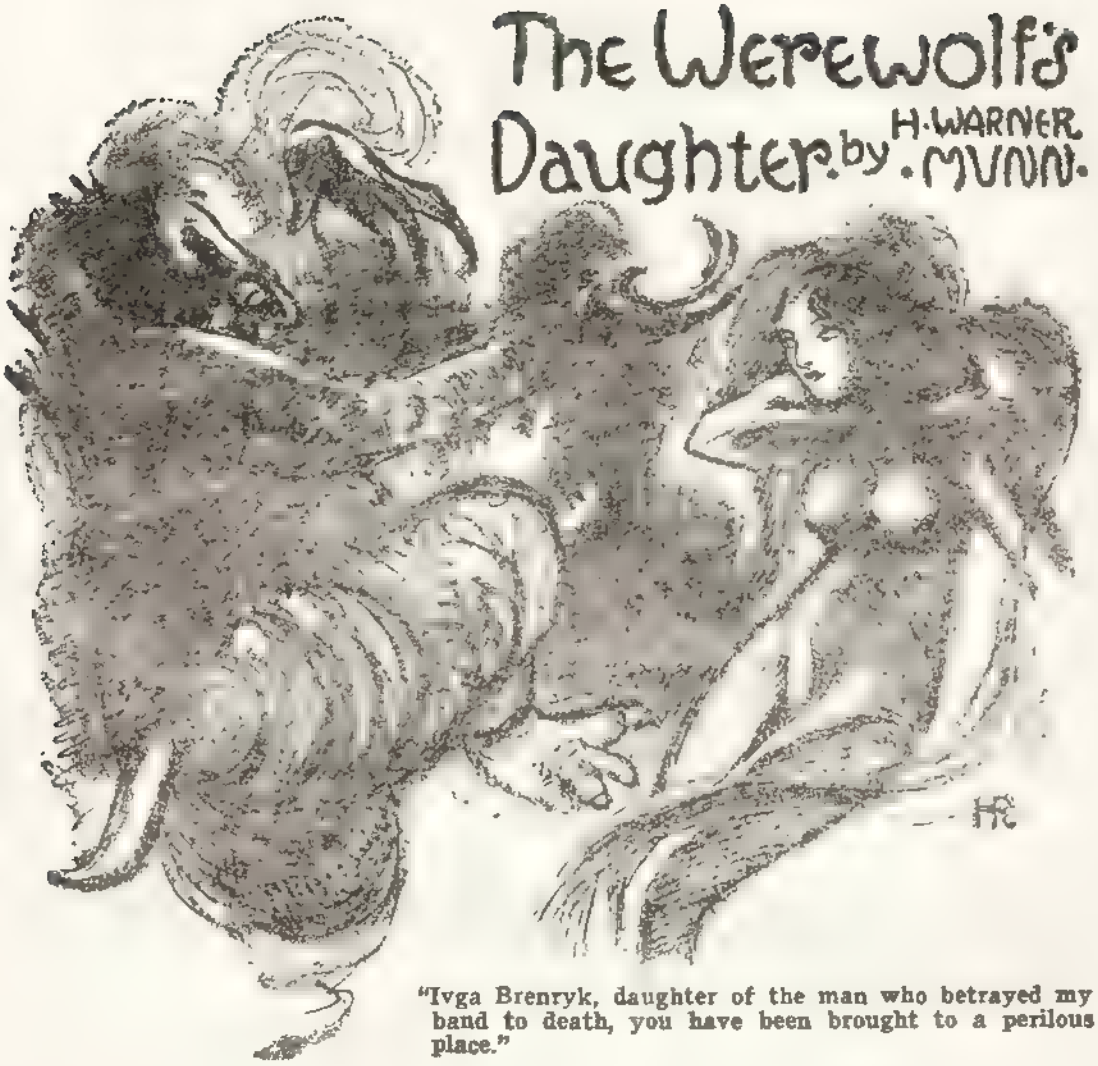
(Reprint)

Satan, yawning on his brazen seat,
Fondles a screaming thing his fiends have flayed,
Ere Lilith come his indolence to greet,
Who leads from hell his whitest queens, arrayed
In chains so heated at their master's fire
That one new-damned had thought their bright attire
Indeed were coral, till the dazzling dance
So terribly that brilliance shall enhance.

*From "A Wine of Wizardry."

The Werewolf's Daughter

by H. WARNER MUNN



"Ivga Brenryk, daughter of the man who betrayed my band to death, you have been brought to a perilous place."

The Story Thus Far

HUGO GUNNAR, a young French noble who has run away from home and joined a gipsy band, falls in love with Ivga Brenryk, daughter of the dead Wladislaw Brenryk of Ponkert, who had been put to death as a werewolf. He procures horses to take Ivga away to France as his bride, with her foster-father, the crippled Dmitri Helgar. But Ivga, being the daughter of a werewolf, has long been suspected of being a witch, and while Hugo is obtaining the horses for their flight, she is seized by the villagers and tied to a post on the public gallows, subjected to the abuse and torments of the populace. The villagers have been roused to this procedure by finding a woodchopper dead in the forest, frightfully mangled by wolves, and Ivga, as the werewolf's daughter, is held to be the cause of the woodchopper's death. She is dragged from Dmitri's home and hung in chains in the public square of Ponkert, ready to be burned at the stake on the morrow.

7. The Coming of the Curse

NOW, as the girl hung, only partly conscious, in the chains that bound her to the post, weak and dazed from the beating and insults she had received, heart-sick, for she believed Dmitri dead and that Hugo had forsaken her, she felt that all that makes life worth living had been taken away.

So, when she felt something from outside calling gently, insistently, and her spirit tugged at her body impatient to be free, although she feared, she did not resist; and presently her spirit was drawn from her body like a sword from its sheath and

This story began in WEIRD TALES for October

hovered silently above its former shell.

As her astral self hung there, a spirit invisible to the eyes of the sentry, who paced below whistling an eery tune to dispel the demons of the night, she seemed to have been lifted into another realm in which there was no pain nor suffering, no hunger nor thirst, no sorrow nor delight, but only a restful sense of peace that permeated her being, and she longed to remain in that blissful state forever.

She felt that something held her, and she looked down to behold that a wisp of cord connected this new self with the body she had quitted, and quite naturally it came to her that, if the cord were broken, she would be free and the torturers that were to come in the morning would be cheated.

Timidly at first, then harder, she tugged at the cord, which gave and stretched but would not snap. At each tug, the body in the straps quivered and twitched, and at last moaned.

The sentry started, swore at his nerves and continued his dreary whistling, three minor notes over and over again in monotonous succession. Whether it was the continued strain on the cord or the magic in the tune or the dismal creak and whine of the heavy book, swinging in its rusty chains, or perhaps all three uniting, the cord began to stretch and thin to a thread. Soon it would part!

Then the girl felt the proximity of another, very near, one who radiated such an immense power that it surged in waves through her spirit like an elixir of life. And obeying an unspoken command to turn, she ceased the strain upon the cord and faced the stranger.

Instinctively she knew, feeling no surprize, that the spirit intended evil. It was neither male nor female in principle, yet seemed both. Like herself it hovered, had limbs and a body, yet was not human but a spirit. In its face there was a look of sadness yet of confidence in its own power to overcome any obstacle; a frightful sorrow as of one who broods over lost opportunities, having made a mistake which can not be repaired, yet knows that he is all-powerful against any foe, so that the spirit's pride was arrogant and domineering.

It was a lost soul that stared into the girl's face, and she suddenly became aware that as it pertained of both man and woman, yet was neither, so it was also higher than the brute and lower than human—and was neither. Still she did not feel afraid, for she had passed human sensations and left them with the body, bound to the stone post.

In this manner did spirit of human meet spirit of elemental, and converse was held upon equal ground.

While she watched the odd figure, its black lips moved and words croaked forth.

"Althusar, companion of the years, art thou present?" it asked, and by its side there took shape the figure of a man, swarthy in hue, with narrow, jet-black eyes, dark hair, and kindly in aspect, who smiled upon the girl.

He was garbed in a long, flowing robe of white, which was ornamented by signs of the zodiac in gold embroidery and a dragon in flaming scarlet, its scales outlined in gold, that seemed with his movements to live and writhe as it coiled about his waist. Around his high forehead a circlet of dull red metal was set, holding back his hair, and mounted in it were a ruby, several pearls, and a large, flawless white diamond, forming with the circlet a symbolical arrangement of the four elements—Earth, Fire, Water and Air.

The girl recognized that she was in the presence of a most potent magic and made obeisance. Althusar smiled and stretched out his hand to her.

"Do not be afraid." The words impinged upon her consciousness, but she heard no voice; she knew with a certainty, which seemed quite natural, that the thought of the man had communicated with her own without the need of clumsy spoken words.

"Perhaps," she thought, "this is the language that ghosts speak," and she answered, "I am not afraid; but who are you, who are called Althusar, and what is this creature which has brought me from my body into this strange place?"

"That is what he has brought you here to tell you," replied the man, nodding toward the other. "As for me, I am a mage of the Chaldees, and his companion."

"But *who* is he?" insisted the girl's spirit.

"On Earth," came the dreadful words, "men call him—the Master!"

Below, the girl's body strained against her bonds until the stout leather creaked and the sentry looked up, grinning.

"Art anxious for the morning, little sparrow?" he called. "Patience, Devil-chick; the night is cold, but we prepare a blanket woven of flames for thee, with the dawn." So saying, the man cheerily continued his whistling and strode his path about the grim structure, nor knew of the drama fraught with doom for many yet unborn, that was being enacted invisibly above his head.

"The Master, the black demon of my father's story, the werewolf of ill omen, the wrecker of my house, the subtle tempter of men has me!"

So thought the girl, and the monster, sadly, hypocritically, bowed its head, a sardonic chuckle rumbling from its chest. And the Master spoke, saying: "Ivga Brenryk, daughter of the man who betrayed my band to death, thou hast been brought to a perilous place because of thy ancestry. Is it so? True, it is through no fault of thine, but on the morrow thou diest as surely as the sun will rise, unless I save thee, and I am the only one who can. Thou understandest? Good! Listen then to the history of one whom Earthlings call the Master.

"Around the dark star near Algol, which is called by men 'The Demon,' there spin many minor planets in its shadow unlit by any ray of light. On them no vegetation thrives, no animals, no fish; no form of animate life moves, visible to the eye. Great balls of jagged rock, without an atmosphere or seas, they hurtle through space to an unknown goal. Yet they are peopled to the point of overcrowding by spirits who have never known the joys of a body; skilled in the Black Arts are these elementals, and constantly they exert an undreamed-of power on human affairs upon this and other planets more fortunately placed than they. Constantly they yearn to experience the satisfactions of a body, the feel of light and air, the sounds of things in motion upon another planet; and scheming, they plot ever to steal a body when they may, knowing that they will never gain one else.

"I was one of these. From Nithrys, the largest of the minor orbs, I came to Earth drawn by the power of a sorceress in ancient Babylon, of which you have never heard but which was a great city in its time. By her magic arts she knew of Algol and its dark people that round it spin. Thinking to gain the power of one of these for herself, she sent a man's spirit from his body as we have done to you, and while he was away, I slipped within his shell and united myself with it by ties which can not be broken except by my will.

"I came to Earth meaning no harm to any that dwelt therein, longing only for life and happiness, but the sorceress, while I slept, did monstrous things with various magics be-

fore my rude spirit was fully shaped to its new house!

"A devil I became! A demon that she planned to rule and use for her own purposes! When she was finished, this body could never die by sickness or by accident. Flame only can kill me, and so Althusar foresees that I shall die at last. Althusar, the soul of the body I stole, is likewise bound while I and this body dwell together; for never having truly died, his destiny can not be completed until the body is vacant and he can enter to pass from it in the proper manner. He lives a life in death, a spirit that haunts me wherever I roam, but we are friends for we both have suffered. My only companion is Althusar and I am his!

"Now, we who dwell on Nithrys have magic of our own, and the magic of her who sought to rule me was not strong enough when I knew my strength. Because of her crime against me, I swore that I would bow to nothing, but Master over all I saw would I be; and I have had opposition, but I win. The sorceress who would have slaved me was the first, she becoming a slave herself!

"From that time I have carved a red path through history, a bloody reckoning upon the human race that made me the thing I am. For I slay with a single purpose, and it is well for him who dies instead of choosing the life I offer; life with the Master is not good for slaves!

"Tribes, cities, nations have fought together, puny, miserable wars to ease petty spites. I, the unconquerable, declared war upon a world! Alone I stand against the human race, a victor. But in one thing have I failed. The future is not clear to me. A little way I can pierce the shadows, but not far; so from Althusar my comrade in misfortune, skilled in the White Magic and the lore of the stars, I learn the paths I follow.

"So, Althusar, read what the future has for me and the seed of Brenryk down the years. Speak Babylonian!"

Then spoke the white-robed man, and his words were stern, yet tempered with a note of pity, and he said:

"So again must I see for thee. I look into the future, oh Vagrant Wanderer, and I see sorrow and great tribulation for all that come near thee.

"I see Europe running red with blood, and thou shalt be the cause!

"I see the smoke of the torturers' fires rising high and I smell the stench of smoldering bodies, brought to this pass by thee!

"I see misfortune for all who bear the name of Gunnar, and death for most!"

The Master smiled grimly. "Go on!" he said.

Althusar hesitated. "Must I?" he asked. "Thou wilt be happier, ignorant."

"Go on," repeated the Master; "I would know all or nothing. Make an end."

"I see thee, Wanderer, passing like a flame through every land on earth but one, and following close strides Death, but one pace behind, in your wake men dropping before his scythe like wheat before the sickle.

"Europe shall be overrun by vampires, werewolves, witches and warlocks of thy making, and the Powers of Darkness shall triumph over the world—for a time."

"Is this your evil tidings, Babylonian? Sad, indeed!" The Master chuckled. "So shall I be avenged upon this crawling vermin that infest the earth. So do I take a bloody reckoning for my wrongs, knowing no mercy. And then?"

"Then," a stern note crept into the voice of Althusar, "then, Scourge of Mankind, thy doom follows fast!

"From a land across the seas, a land yet undiscovered, one shall come that will meet your magic with stronger magic, and as you strive

again to bend others to your will, you shall be dashed to earth and smashed by those you have destroyed. But the manner of your overthrow is hidden from me by a veil which I can not pierce, and I can give you no warning."

"I do not understand you," calmly said the Master. "Is that all?"

"Not quite," Althusar answered; "not quite. I see dimly through a mist of fire, a cloud of sparks whirling high in which you lie dying but not in pain. I see myself slip into my body which you stole, and also die. Together then, I see ourselves traveling side by side toward a place of rest where our labors shall be done and this curse of life in death shall be lifted from us. And peace forever and oblivion shall be ours.

"This, oh Wanderer, is all that I can see. The rest is hidden from even these far-piercing eyes of mine, but this I know: the end draws near. For upon an unknown sea, three ships are sailing, sailing into the west. And from the hidden country that they will find, your conqueror comes!

"I have done! Say your say!"

The Master pondered long before replying; then with an air of having made an irrevocable decision he spoke, saying:

"The Master am I! Master of men, of beasts, of elementals! Master of all living things that I choose to hold, yet to you, reader of the stars and the future, I confess that I am not master of myself. I am earthbound and I go forward blindly, driven to my destiny by forces of which I know nothing.

"You and I, comrade, are both victims of the sorceress; yet is the greater sorrow mine, for I have not willed that I should be dreaded on Earth, hated and feared and dragging others to destruction with me, but my ambition was to dwell within a body and be like men.

"I have gone too far; I can not turn back now or ever. I go forward, ever forward to complete my destiny, and though what you have read for me may be true, I do not repine, for come what may I *have* lived!

"But be thou ready, comrade, to enter this bodily shell, when I its present tenant shall be dispossessed; and because of our common sorrow and our friendship, I will spare this girl, for two reasons: her life has been one long wo because of me and it shall be pleasant from today; and I perceive that through her I can gain others in ever increasing numbers as time rolls on, and though by so doing I destroy myself, I *will* rule!"

Then to the girl's astral self the Master addressed himself, and his words were wondrous gentle:

"Your life I have seen, and your trouble and the hate of these scoundrels here for you. Long I have brooded near this village, scheming, plotting, planning how I might be avenged upon your father. He betrayed me in life, though I admit his cause was great, for I have been a cruel Master ever to my slaves, and he cheated me even in death, dying in a manner that forbade my interference. For a time I meant to wreak my vengeance upon you, the last of his line, trusting that he might see and be punished; but you have suffered, aye, all your life you have suffered for your father's sin and it is in my mind to show you mercy. My revenge I must have and I will! But I can wait.

"The years are nothing to those who are immortal. I give you choice: Be my slave and I will free you and the score is evened. Also the people of Ponkert shall suffer most greatly from us, for that which they have done this day.

"And the other choice: Refuse my offer, still I free you, your lover shall be yours and all your lifetime

you shall go unharmed by me; but at your death, should you leave heirs then shall they be my prey. One from each generation and perhaps more shall I take, until your line is stamped from the earth and is exterminated. This I promise and will fulfil! Say, girl, if from your offspring, if such there be, I may have one to do my will! Choose! It is yourself or the unknown, the *unborn!*"

"You may," said the girl, *aloud,* in the flat, dull tone of a sleeper.

"It is well!" He chuckled and then in a persuasive manner he sprang his trap.

"Of each generation?" was all that he said, but the three words spelled sorrow, misery and terror to countless souls yet unborn, for she had the power by a word to decide the future of many, as they were yet uncreate and upon her decision their very existence depended. This being true, she had likewise the power to use them, these unborn descendants, as she would.

"Yes," she said, in her *bodily* voice, and by the word she slew hundreds of unborn souls as surely as though she had laid a knife to their throats. By that word, a chain of helpless victims was established even to the present day, each victim dragging others with him like link after link of an anchor chain plunging into the sea, one pulling the next till many are beneath.

A look of devilish joy swept across the Master's distorted face and an accompanying look of sorrow lay upon the countenance of the Babylonian as he vanished.

"It is well," said the Master. "Your body will forget these words now. But later you will remember again. One is coming even now to free you."

And with the words, he also disappeared forever from her sight.

8. How Two Men Came to Ponkert

It was a nervous bird that hopped into the cottage by the wood, and cocking its head upon one side as it looked at the motionless figure upon the floor it listened fearfully and perhaps reasoned as follows:

"He did not move. Apparently he is dead, but then one can never tell, these humans are so cunning! It may be a trap! Truly these were hard times when a self-respecting bird must enter the very den of the ogre for food. But what would you? One must live!"

So he sidled closer and administered a sharp experimental peck on the man's neck.

He was a large but timid bird, so that when a groan issued from the prostrate form, he squawked raucously and pelted out of the cottage in a scurrying whir of wings, coming to rest in a near-by tree, and talked to himself at some length, concerning his bravery, while he watched for further developments.

These were not long in coming. The man moved his fingers slightly as though they clenched on something, and groaned again; after which he began to mumble broken words, face in the dust.

"Oh God!" he muttered; "if there is a God, help me now! Give me back my strength just for a little while! She is a pretty little girl and she always loved You. She is so dear and sweet and lovable. Are You going to let her die?"

His voice sank to a confidential murmur. "You see, God, I've got to go. I can't stay here while they hurt her. I promised I would always guard and keep her. Must I break my given word? It's a wicked, cruel joke to play this trick with me. I know I've been wicked in many ways and I deserve no pity, but don't You see, God, it isn't for me I ask? You aren't punishing me, but my little girl, and what did she ever do? I

don't care what becomes of me. Take my soul and thrust me into the deepest pit of Hell, but save her! Oh, God! Give me back my strength! Give—give——"

The feeble voice droned away to silence. Dmitri Helgar, mercenary Czech, captain in the Black Brigade, had finished his first prayer.

The room was darker before there was further movement. The afterglow of sunset was fading and an early star shone, when Dmitri spoke again.

"Strength and a sword!" he exclaimed in a strong voice, far different from the former tone, although he had not stirred. "A sword and an arm to wield it," he said in the tones of one who sleeps yet speaks, and his right arm began to raise itself upon the fingertips like a monstrous insect blindly sprawling, and like an insect the hand crawled toward the well-beloved sword hilt.

The fingers missed by inches, but continued to walk as far as the arm's length would permit, then staggered along crabwise, the thumb creeping ahead, digging into the floor and contracting, thus pulling the hand behind it, and at last touched the cool sword. A great explosive "Ah!" burst from the pale lips, blowing the dust away, as the fingers closed about the hilt.

The touch was like the caress of a lover. From the grip on Gate-Opener came power and returning vigor, and now, as he lay there, his wan cheeks flushed with new health. More even! Whether it was from the prayer or from his desperate desire to go to Ivga's rescue, a strange feeling pulsed through his limbs. In legs that had been numb and lifeless for a year, a prickling sensation came and went and came again. And when it passed, he found that his feet would move!

Then while he marveled, rapt with the wonder of the seeming miracle, he heard voices outside the cottage.

Two men came laughing down the road, talking loudly as they neared the building, then suddenly becoming quiet. Careful footsteps came up to the door and paused. A deep hatred came to Dmitri, as he lay rigid, listening.

"He has not moved. He is dead," whispered one. "You killed him with that last kick, Wesoskas!"

The other laughed evilly. "A good deed then. I owed it to him. No man strikes me, but he pays—sometime. *He* struck me once; did I ever tell you?"

"I believe you did, now that you speak of it," said the smith, sardonically. "Come. The night falls. If any soldier should hear of this and see us here——"

The idiot giggled. "Soon! Soon! I want to talk to him a bit."

Leaning farther through the doorway, he cried, "Hey in there, listen to this! She is in town, fastened to the stake. Wouldn't you like to see your imp now?

"She won't kill any more men or blind them for looking at her. We have her fast, and at dawn she burns!

"The wood is gathered, the pile is ready, and the pitch is at hand. Ha-ha-ha! Old man! Old man! Can you hear me in Hell, old man? Hey? Why don't you answer me?"

The smith seized him, horrified at this tormenting of a dead man. "Come, you fool, come away," he urged; "I hear sounds in the wood."

"All right," chuckled the tanner, "I've got to leave you, old man. Remember! At dawn she dies. I'm sorry now I killed you. Really I am. If you could only see it!"

And then his voice was lifted in expostulations against the force his companion was using in dragging him away.

As the complaints became fainter and could no longer be heard, a tenebrous shadow moved with no body to cause it, and squatted, a puddle of blackness, in a corner.

And in the deserted cottage a thing happened which would have chilled the blood of the idiot tanner.

The form he had thought a corpse raised itself upon its knees and for the first time in a year stood erect upon its feet!

For a moment Dmitri stood listening by the door, then crossed to the wall, with steps that were uncertain and wavered. He lifted down the leather harness that would fasten the broadsword to his back and buckled the straps together. When he returned to the door and placed Gate-Opener in its sheath, he did so with a surer stride. Though the sword was heavy, he fitted the harness about his shoulders and stood straight in the doorway, looking out over the trees at the stars which gleamed also over Ponkert, a mile away.

Reverently he bowed his head, believing his prayer had been answered. Every moment now he felt stronger, although his legs were still weak and trembled beneath Gate-Opener's weight.

Dmitri had never been a religious man. Indeed, one of his frequent sayings was: "If there is a God at all, He must pay more attention to those who are not always bothering Him by asking for something. How weary He must be of begging!" But now it seemed that even the strong were sometimes weak, and with a full heart he would have worshiped and given thanks, but could find no words and all the while precious time was fleeting by, never to return.

He raised his hands beseechingly to the stars and cried: "I am coming, Ivga! If you are alive, I will free you or die in Ponkert square. If they have killed you, look down from the parapets of Heaven and watch the wizened souls of Ponkert dead go squealing by to Satan's halls. And Brenryk, watch a Helgar keep a promise!"

He descended the steps and walked slowly into the forest, toward the village.

Behind him, a black pool of shadow, darker than the rest of the night shades, flowed down the steps and along the path. It was oddly shaped as though something stunted and deformed lingered there, suiting its pace to that of the old man just ahead. Yet there was no one else that could be seen, walking down the path.

At this time, which was about the second hour of the night, a small procession stopped just outside Ponkert.

A hiss had sounded from a thicket, and Hugo drew rein and half rose in his saddle. "Who is there?" he said. "Step in front of me!"

"It is you, Hugo?" a cautious whisper came. "I am glad. I have waited hours for you to come."

From the bushes hobbled a hunched figure, wrapped about in a long, black cloak, and he recognized the wrinkled face as that of the gipsy crone, Clauda, his best friend after Mirko.

"What is it?" he said, startled by her strange look. "What has happened?"

"Don't go through the village, Hugo," she replied, clutching the bridle; "the people will kill you. They have seen you with the werewolf's daughter and they will burn you, too!"

"Burn me, *too!*" His heart almost stopped beating. "Have they burned *her?*"

"Not yet," was the grim reply, "but in the morning."

"Quick, Mother Clauda! What have they done? Where is she?"

"In the square, bound to the stake on the scaffold. Hugo, what are you going to do?"

The last words were almost a scream, for the boy had leapt from his horse and torn away her cloak.

"I am going to save her," he replied, and wrapped the cloak about him, drawing it close about his head.

"They will kill you, Hugo. Is she worth it?" quavered old Clauda, her lips trembling.

He turned to her tenderly and placed his arm about her waist.

"Clauda, you have been a mother to me and we love each other, do we not? But now my heart lies in Ponkert, and if this girl dies, my life is an empty thing, for she is my worship and we have sworn an oath together. Take the horses to the camp, and if I never return they shall be yours, for I have plenty of money with me. Give Mirko a farewell, and this for thee."

He bent and kissed the soft, withered lips. They were wet with tears. Then gently he disengaged the arms that clung to keep him with her and he was away, running with long strides into the village streets, making a wide circle to avoid the first row of buildings.

Clauda, sobbing, led the horses around the village. With an uncanny prescience, she knew she would never see the boy again, and the days ahead would be bleak and drear without him.

And thus it came about that on the third night of the caravan's stay, from opposite sides of Ponkert came two men, animated with a single purpose, pawns in a game that neither could have understood—a game whose beginning was before their known history and whose end and far-reaching effects may not yet be done.

9. Rapier Versus Saber

IVGA cried out and opened her eyes to a blinding glare. A sputtering torch scorched her face and hair as the guard bent over her and shook her shoulder roughly.

"What are you talking about?" he snarled. "None of your tricks, vixen! Art calling up some fiend from hell to serve thee, witch? Silence, or I'll slit your tongue! Why don't you answer me? Answer me; to whom were you talking? Why did you say 'You may!' and again 'Yes!' when no one spoke to you. *Why*, rat sister?"

With the entering of her body again, Ivga had forgotten the meeting with the Master and now she could only blink into the glare and murmur, "Someone is coming at last," hardly knowing the meaning of the words, for the Master had taken back the memory of the meeting as one last mercy.

Still holding her by the shoulder, the guard turned about, his face white with fear, for he was prone to superstition and expected to see some bat-winged thing close by, called from its evil nest by the witch.

A man was standing below at the foot of the steps.

His face was not visible, for a fold of his long black cloak hid all but his eyes, which glinted like steel in the brilliant moonlight.

The revulsion of feeling was too much for the sentry. "Who are you and what do you want?" he queried boldly. A sepulchral voice issued from the black cloak.

"I am a messenger from Hell for you, dog brother," it said. "Your place is prepared. Come!"

With slow tread the figure mounted the steps, and the sentry backed away as it came higher.

"Stop!" he squeaked in a terrified falsetto. "What do you want?"

The black cloak fell to the ground as the man sprang up the last two steps, and the girl gasped "Hugo!" as he flashed her a quick, cheery smile and advanced toward her guard.

"I want the girl and your blood!" he spat. "Death to you, gutter offal!" And the guard, seeing that it was only a man before him, sprang forward, roaring.

Hugo grinned as a wolf grins; then, as the guard's sword hissed from its scabbard, the primitive rapier glimmered in the boy's hand like a

slender pencil of light and the two blades engaged.

Back across the platform the sentry rushed the weaker man in the first shock of conflict, his longer weapon whirling wickedly and striking sparks as it clashed against the slim pointed rod that seemed to be always in the way.

Parrying his fiercest strokes, the rapier slanted from side to side, never thrusting or remaining still, but always retreating before the guard's ferocious slashes. Yet the saber bit nothing but air, being deftly turned aside in midstroke before it had reached maximum velocity, and it ever whistled off at a tangent.

They reached the platform's edge, and Hugo, watching his opponent's eyes, read in them a sudden evil glee, and suspecting something uncertain, therefore to be dreaded, he danced abruptly to the left. As he did so, his groping foot found empty space in place of solid plank and he shot out from the scaffold, falling eight feet and landing quite solidly upon the cobblestone pavement of the square.

Almost instantly he was up again, but no longer smiling, and one who watched would have noticed that his movements lacked the resilience and spring of a moment before. Three slashes he parried mechanically, dazed by the blow; then, as his brain cleared, he took the offensive. Enough time had been wasted!

Through tight-clenched teeth his breath hissed like the angry speech of a snake, and now menacing, the rapier point pressed forward and did not give ground.

All of the guard's experience up to that time had been with cutting weapons—sabers, axes, broadswords, large and ugly tools for hacking, designed to kill or maim with a single blow. Thrusting weapons were likewise clumsy, spears and pikes in a dozen cruel forms and variations; these were the weapons of the time. Small wonder that Ivga had laughed at Hugo's rapier, so small in comparison!

But the guard, hard-pressed and fighting for his life against a strange weapon and an unknown method of fighting would have felt no inclination to jeer, could he have spared the time. A blur was before his eyes, and from his cheek a warm salty trickle ran into his gasping mouth, where Hugo's point had torn in a barely deflected drive for the throat.

"Moonlight is good to die in," laughed the boy. "Are you ready, woman-beater?"

This was the first blood drawn during the fight and had the instant effect of setting the guard wild and reckless, so that he rushed into the almost invisible circle of steel.

In fifteen seconds, with three cleverly executed strokes, one sidestep and a parry, Hugo pinked his antagonist neatly through the fleshy portion of his left shoulder, and thus turning the man a quarter round, he slipped the rapier point into his enemy's right wrist as his arm was raised for a blow.

With the double power of the upward thrust and the downward blow, the rapier tore through arm and sleeve as it might through paper, leaving the arm useless.

From the guard's nerveless fingers fell the curved sword, slitting the side of Hugo's boot as it clanked upon the stones; this was his only injury in all that strange fight. Quickly reaching with his left hand, the man clutched for the fallen sword, but contrary to the usual procedure for the victor in such cases (at least in fiction) Hugo did not, nobly but foolishly, step aside and allow him to pick it up. Instead, being a human being fighting for his own life and all that he held precious, he did the natural thing under the circumstances.

As the guard lurched forward, the rapier point met him. He was con-

scious of a fierce burning pain over his heart, a chill numb feeling in his lung, and that was all. For an instant, Hugo kept the pose, left hand half behind him, right knee bent, right arm and rapier forming a straight line that ended in the guard's chest. Then as the man swayed forward, Hugo saw that his back was growing a hump and through his coat the needle-point pricked between the shoulder-blades.

As a tree falls, so fell the guard, dragging the rapier from Hugo's hand, leaving the boy staring down at him.

Dead! Although he had seen many so, this was his first victory that had ended in death, and suddenly he felt sick in the pit of his stomach. It was so easy to kill a man!

On the scaffold, Ivga spoke weakly, and conquering his squeamishness, Hugo tugged at his blade. The flesh clung about it as though loth to let it go, and before it was free, he was forced to set his foot on the chest of the corpse and pull with all his strength.

With a swift stroke, he wiped clean the rapier upon the dead man's coat, and holding the slender rod in one hand, drew his dagger with the other and leapt up the steps of the scaffold.

His keen knife made short work of the leather thongs that bound her body to the pillar, and with the guard's keys he released her from the chains. She opened her eyes and smiled at him, a pale wan smile that wrung his heart as he slashed at her cruel bonds.

"I knew you would come," she whispered, and her arms went out to him.

As she took a step forward, her limbs, being paralyzed by the tightness of the straps, gave way beneath her and she fell to her knees upon the rough planks. Instantly he was holding her close, and her voice sobbed thickly to him, muffled, for her face was pressed hard against his cheek:

"Oh, Hugo! I can not walk! What are we to do?"

In that moment, feeling her dependence upon him and her implicit trust that somehow he would save her, the boy became a man. A deep love and yearning to protect welled up within him, called by her helplessness, and he replied:

"We will go at once to the camp. Mirko will hide us. Come!" And he stood up.

The girl attempted to rise, but the pain was too great and she collapsed again. Her wrists were deeply cut by the chains, and as she chafed her ankles she could feel no sensation in her hands.

"You go," she said finally. "Leave me here. I shall only be a burden to you. The watchman will come through here soon and we can not both escape. Flee, Hugo, before the alarm, else we both die; and I don't want you to die, too!"

He grinned. "You rave. Did you really believe I would go away from you now? No, if we are killed, we die together. Let us go to Mirko."

He sheathed his weapons, lifted her in his arms and descended the steps.

"Get the book on the beam, Hugo," said Ivga; "it is mine."

And with the book in her arms, Hugo carried her proudly across the deserted square, eery in the white moonglare and peopled now only by the few stray dogs that skulked in the shadows—lean curs that kept an odd silence and followed close behind, a couple already investigating the dead man.

They entered a narrow street and left the square some distance behind, before either spoke.

Ivga lay quiet in his arms, watching his stern face for some signs of weakness, but though his lips were tightly compressed, his breath came even and unhurried as he swung

along, covering ground rapidly and with long strides.

"Am I heavy, Hugo?" she once asked. "Set me down a little and rest."

His answer was to crush her tighter against his chest.

"You are not heavy at all, little sweetheart. I could carry you forever!"

She clasped her arms around his neck, relieving him of a little of the strain, the book in her lap, and kissed him with a swift movement; then her brown hair sank down upon his shoulder and the tired eyes closed.

Tenderly he bore her, for her cuts and bruises were many and he thought perhaps she slept. They entered an alley which opened off the side street, giving a view of dark tree-tops against the stars. His aim was to reach the gipsy encampment if possible and to place himself and the girl under the protection of the chief, feeling certain that the cowardly villagers would not dare to attack a strong force.

Finally he was compelled to release his dear burden and rest. While he rubbed his cramped arms, he saw from the tail of his eye a stealthy movement behind the corner of a building as though someone had peered out and darted back.

Sword in hand, he ran back, but nothing was in sight and he returned to the girl. Again he gathered her carefully into his arms and strode off, often turning now to look behind, but he saw no stir or movement.

This had continued for perhaps five minutes, and his suspicions were almost lulled when Ivga's head lifted from his shoulder and her curls brushed his cheek.

"Someone is following us," she whispered, her lips tickling his ear.

"I know," he answered and quickened his pace.

A large building was before them. Once around the corner he laid her down, again freed his sword and waited, teeth bared in his characteristic battle-grin.

A head poked cautiously around the corner, saw the ready blade, jaw dropping in horror and surprize, and was instantly withdrawn. It was the watchman!

Hugo leapt in pursuit of the fleeing man, who yelled with every bound, imagining the point was already in his back. The watchman's lantern clanked on the stones and bounded rattling along, hurled despairingly at the pursuer.

The race was short. The boy rapidly overtook the runner; there was a brief flash of steel, rapier against dagger, and the cries stopped —but the mischief had been done.

Windows began to creak open and voices to shout from house to house as he ran, hugging the shadows next the walls, back to Ivga.

"Quick!" he panted. "To the gipsies. They will help us!" And he stooped to pick her up.

"No," she exclaimed, "it is too far. They would catch us long before we could get there. We will go to the river, find a boat and drift downstream until we are far away!"

"But we will have to go back through the village to reach the boats," he protested.

"Come!" She tugged impatiently at him. "Don't argue! I know a way. If we climb that mountain and go down the other side, the river is just below us. Dmitri"—she choked on the word—"and I had a little boat that we hid in the rocks; we used to sail on the river and fish from it."

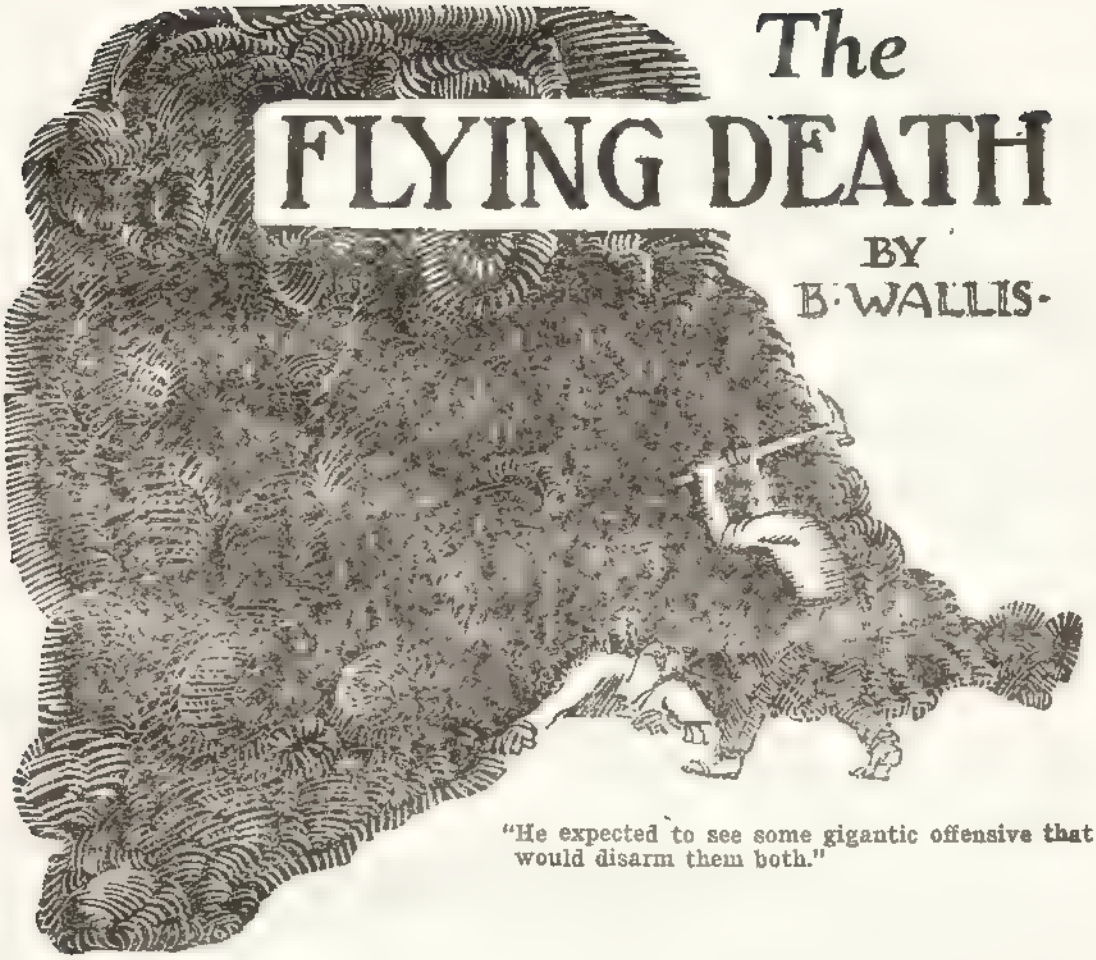
"Can we go around the mountain?" he gasped, doubting her strength for such a climb.

"No," she replied, jerkily. "Thick brush one side. River too deep on the other. Can't swim. I can climb. Hurry!"

The terrific battle at the base of the mountain, the spectacular death of Dmitri, and the fate of the fugitives will be narrated in the thrilling chapters that conclude this story in next month's WEIRD TALES.

The FLYING DEATH

BY B. WALLIS



"He expected to see some gigantic offensive that would disarm them both."

"SAY, what was that, Bill?" exclaimed the taller and thinner of the two men staring at the thick bush that for some way lined each side of the dusty lane.

"Hanged if I know, Joe—thunderbolt, maybe," replied his companion, eyeing blankly the dense scrub.

"Thunderbolt! But there ain't no clouds," objected Joe, turning his gaze to the evening sky. "Least nothing to speak of," he amended his assertion as he solemnly surveyed a few dwindling remnants of what an hour ago had been a mass of gray vapor that all day had veiled the glare and tempered the scorching rays of a July sun.

Though there had been a promise of rain in the low-lying shroud, yet toward evening it had thinned and rapidly dispersed, so that shortly only a few wisps flushed with the setting sun were left. Most certainly the mighty Thor stored no shaft of his in such flimsy housing. Yet something—they had no idea what—from out the nowhere had suddenly plunged through the bush with a frightful crash. Close beside them, apparently not a dozen paces from the lane, it had entered the fringing wood with terrific force and its short transit from the topmost boughs to the ground was but a rending smash of splintered wood punctuated by the dull impact that wound up its volcanic career.

"Well, if it ain't a thunderbolt, what is it?" queried Bill. "It come

from way up, anyway, whatever it is," he added with conviction.

"How about a flying-machine, then?" observed his friend hopefully.

"This wasn't all that size," countered Bill, still slightly nettled by the summary rejection of his thunderbolt. "But say! it might be a guy—a birdman—dropped out of his machine. Gee! maybe come down miles and miles! Gosh!" and he ceased as the profundity of that presumed descent gripped him.

"Flying-men don't fall out—they're strapped in, ain't they?" said Joe diffidently, his temperamental skepticism more than a little shaken by the nerve-racking phenomenon. "But—Lord! if it is a guy come down, he'll be a sight!" he added in an awestruck mutter.

The two men stared at each other in sudden fear. They realized that the terrible final thud had been sickeningly suggestive of something limp, inert, and compressible; imagination completed the picture and speculation abruptly ceased.

"Say, Bill!" said the tall man hoarsely. "We got to go in there." He nodded toward the fringing bush.

"Yep, I guess so; I ain't stuck on it, though," replied Bill with a catch in his voice. "Come on!" he added with querulous impatience.

Now that the matter had assumed such a significant aspect, their course, distasteful though it might be, was quite clear. And it augurs well for the future of our race that two very ordinary individuals such as these, whose lives from boyhood had been devoted to a pursuit of the slippery dollar rolling between the purchase and disposal of second-hand furniture and personal effects, should so instantly and simply obey the dictates of our common humanity. Naturally their vocation carried them far afield, and to this fact—and a lately deceased farmer—they owed their introduction to the little fishing-village of Lytham, Maine, and the after-supper stroll that had been interrupted so rudely.

At once the two men entered the scrub, and for a little they cast about like a couple of sedate retrievers in search of their objective. Then they came upon it, resting in a little open space tunneled by the shattering of stems and the stripping of limbs from a stouter and taller growth that chanced here to rear a spearlike crest as though to mark the horror at its base.

"My God, Joe! What's this? Reckon he's dead—don't you?" exclaimed Bill in an awed whisper.

"Yep, it's awful! I ain't going no closer," said Joe hastily, then paused and admitted reluctantly, "though I guess we should make certain."

Assuredly death had come in no gracious mood to the poor broken thing they gazed upon. For the man's body was smashed and twisted most horribly and lay in a huddled heap amid the splintered boughs of the tall tree and the crushed shrubbery. Limbs were hinged strangely and repulsively at places where joints are normally absent, and the face was merely a mass of shapeless pulp through which the jagged end of a shattered bough projected. Apart from total disintegration it was hard to conceive of a human frame more completely devastated; it was only too visibly obvious that every bone in the dead man's body was broken and the flesh either gashed, or stripped, or perforated in a score of places.

For a moment the two men stood staring in awed and commiserating silence at the terrible thing, and no further word was uttered concerning a closer investigation. Then the taller man shivered a little and said harshly, "Say, we'd better beat it back and tell the folks in the village."

And at once, stepping softly as though they would conceal their

presence from something feared, they turned and made their way back to the dusty road.

"Say, Bill, this poor guy now," said Joe as they hastened on their mission; "there ain't no doubt but he dropped out of a flying-machine, so high up we never heard it, but it's queer—he's dressed all wrong. It ain't the front of a birdman—or even a passenger—no coat, no mitts or helmet, not even goggles, and him all that way up!"

"That's so," said his companion slowly. "And ain't these flyers strapped in their seats, case of accidents?"

"Sure!" confirmed Joe with the easy assurance that another's ignorance often begets. "Though maybe this guy's straps went back on him, or—by Jiminy!—now I wonder!"

"Wonder what?" queried his companion briefly, the unwonted pace having told on him.

"Well—I dunno. But maybe this guy done it himself—jumped out, went bugs or something!" replied Joe hesitatingly.

"Meanin' suicide? I never heard of a birdman taken that way—they being sure to smash some day," said Bill, voicing the pessimistic popular conception of the fate awaiting such intrepid adventurers.

"But Lord, what a nerve! if he done it—miles and miles of dropping through nothing!" mused Joe, loth to relinquish the horrific pictured descent.

"What would he strip his working-rags for, anyway? There ain't no sense to it," objected his companion with an innate love of debate.

"I dunno—it's a mystery," avowed Joe frankly.

And that was the verdict accorded the occurrence by a coroner's jury and the expert investigators who at once were engaged to elucidate the strange and tragic enigma. For immediately the poor, shattered thing had been identified as one James Symington, a youth in his early twenties, and son of a wealthy shoe manufacturer—a young man of exemplary habit and pleasing personality; quiet, unassuming, and devoted to his parents, his business, and the hobby of photography: in short, a level-headed, estimable young American, and certainly the last one his friends would consider to be afflicted with the insanity of self-destruction—though a most cursory survey of the known facts banished effectually the incipient rumor that possibly the discoverers had thoughtlessly originated.

It appeared that the boy had never ascended a foot save by the aid of his legs or an elevator, and had a natural antipathy to aeronautics. Moreover, on the morning of the tragedy he had left his home for a few days' vacation, and had taken his car and camera out for a ramble along the picturesque Maine coastline, with no particular objective in view but merely to wander as fancy dictated. And the car was found ten miles from the fatal spot, overturned in a ditch bordering a lonely stretch of by-road that there for a space closely parallels the cliffs which for many miles tower a hundred feet or more above the surf-lashed sands.

By what possible means had the victim been transferred from his car, conveyed ten miles, ascended to an unguessable height and there been launched in that terrible descent? It was all inconceivable, both in the mode of its execution and in its object. One might as well endeavor to formulate a plausible explanation of the sudden materialization of a prehistoric monster in the trim flower-beds of a city park! And each detail as it was brought to light but further meshed the affair in a net of mystery.

The little clock in the overturned car had stopped at 6 p. m., and this might reasonably be taken to indicate the moment of capsizing, and

James Symington's translation; but what had at that moment happened? If for some incomprehensible motive the youth had been taken captive and transferred to a flying-machine, where had it alighted, and how arisen? Not a sign of such a happening was visible amid the fields of tall grass ripe for mowing, that lay on the landward side, while to the seaward lay a narrow strip of broken, boulder-strewn waste bounded by a sheer hundred-foot drop; the road itself was much too narrow to accommodate the smallest plane man has ever flown in. Yet by what other means had been effected that rapid migration? For less than half an hour later his body had ended its terrible flight—the taller of the two discoverers, with an eye to future questioning, had glanced at his watch as he emerged from the shrubbery.

Two planes had indeed some hours earlier passed over the neighborhood and been noted by several persons, but both had flown high over the water and quickly vanished into the cloud-weighted horizon; and on inquiry they proved to be a couple of military "busses" used by instructors and their pupils. So there lay not a single shred of tangible evidence to connect the tragedy with the only possible means of its consummation, with an assailant of any nature whatsoever.

The wrecked car was itself inexplicable, the road affording no reasonable excuse for an accident, or any evidence of its nature. The youth's camera was discovered about fifty feet distant, immersed in the scummy seepage that lay in festering pools over the ditch bottom. And though the tracks were barely decipherable because of a stiff breeze that had stirred the fine dust and almost smoothed the indentations, yet there was sufficient evidence to hazard the presumption that the car had been stopped and the owner had alighted and wandered slowly ahead and stood a little while, probably taking pictures of the lonely scenery. Then, more uncertainly, he had returned rapidly, and midway had broken into a run. Ten feet from the car his hat was discovered, in the ditch also; there the steps had ceased, at least no trace of them remained.

From all evidence of the wrecked engine the car had been standing motionless at the moment of its capsizal, and no trace of deep-gashed ruts of swerving wheels was visible. It had simply capsized as though a huge lever had been applied to its side and heaved it over.

There all logical deductions and reasonable surmises ceased; other tracks were obviously more recent and probably left by the wondering farm-hands who early the next morning had passed that way. All that was certain was a car overturned and an owner who had vanished as though snatched aloft by the fabled jinn.

But the medical profession had further and equally astounding testimony to offer. The inquest revealed the startling fact that almost certainly the poor boy had died before that frightful landing, and been done to death in a most abominable manner. The doctors stated that by some strange means every drop of blood had been extracted from the veins and what they examined was but an arid shell as devoid of moisture as a dry sponge. No known wound would account for such complete extravasation; for normally there always remained a residue imprisoned in a network of the lesser conduits by the rapid caving in of the main channels. But this shattered thing was absolutely devoid of the least drop of its life's fluid.

Then more abstrusely the medical evidence spoke of some small areas of skin and tissue still intact about the throat, face and hands; areas

that exhibited a most peculiar condition, being pitted with innumerable minute excrescences which under microscopical examination were found to be of craterlike construction whose vents were in reality but pores greatly distended and ruptured so badly beneath the surface that in their bursting they had lacerated the mesh of tiny veins about them so completely that to the naked eye the tissues appeared merely as a puffed, disorganized mass of macerated pulp. Whether this condition was the result of immense pressures experienced in such a stupendous fall was a matter they lacked the data to affirm or deny, but save for this purely speculative supposition they had no other solution to offer—a pronouncement quite in accord with the cherished traditions of scientific reserve and caution.

As usual, public imagination seized on the sensational, and promptly garbled, misquoted, and maltreated the hesitant speculation, and spoke knowingly of strains and stresses, and vascular tissue, and felt exalted by their perspicacity, and justified in spoiling reams of good paper informing weary editors of absurd and weird conclusions the writers had evolved to account for an impossible, objectless translation to an invisible, untraceable flying-machine.

And there the matter rested; money and brains had collaborated and utterly failed to unearth a single fact upon which to base any rational theory of mode or motive of the killing of James Symington; who being but one man among many millions, each with his bread to earn and his niche to fill in a busy world, it is not surprizing that the millions shortly shelved the tragedy in the dim subconscious vaults where side by side lie every shred of emotion, every fact, everything felt, seen, or heard in a lifetime, be it junk or treasure.

A MONTH later the body of one Harriet Conroy was discovered, face down, on the lonely sands of Ladner Bay, barely three miles distant from the spot where poor Symington's car had capsized.

Again the public thrilled with horror as it learned the strange and gruesome facts connected with the grim tragedy; and with the odd, illogical intuition of the mass mind in moments of high emotion immediately the two fatalities were associated, though save in one particular there lay no resemblance between the manner of the victims' slaying.

Harriet Conroy, only daughter of a retired sea captain, a widower with a modest competence, was school mistress in her home village of Shaldon. Just turned twenty, healthy, cheerful and level-headed, she was liked and respected by all in the little community. The fact of that solitary stroll to Ladner sands was due to no morbid love of lonely self-commune, but merely the result of a persistent headache. For on that tragic day, after tea with her father, she had remarked that probably a brisk walk along the cliffs to the sands would be better than any medicine; and mentioning that on her return she would likely spend a few minutes at a neighbor's, with a smile of affectionate reassurance to her parent she had gone on her way.

That was the last time her father ever watched the trim figure unlatch the little garden gate. At dusk she had not returned, nor an hour later, when, mindful of her words, the lonely old man had smiled and grumbled fondly, "These women! and their minutes—it seems but yesterday she was snug in bed and hours sleeping by this time." Then, thinking a little sadly that a day might come when another home would claim her, he slipped from revery to slumber; and awoke to find the clock hands were nearly laid together and the house as lonely as ever. Then, with a sudden

black fear clutching at his heart, the lost fire of his seafaring youth returned to him, and hatless he ran into the darkness, and pounded fiercely at the doors of sleeping neighbors.

Shortly two friends and the distracted man set off with lanterns the way she had taken—and found her, face downward, cold and dead, in the soft, dry sand above high water. With dreading touch they sought for evidence of foul murder, but failed to discover wound or mark of evil clutch upon her. Then by the yellow light of a lantern they searched the vicinity for trace of assailant; for it was evident there had been a struggle, or rather a defense against something that had overtaken her.

The crooked, rigid fingers, the outthrust arms, and the deep depression in which the victim lay spoke eloquently and horribly of the short, desperate struggle she had waged to protect herself against a merciless antagonist who had leaped and hurled her headlong. While the frenzied old man bent over his darling, moaning and calling piteously to the cold, unhearing ears, his two companions tramped the vicinity and examined closely the soft, shifting sand. Though so loose that the imprint of their steps was at once half filled and blurred beyond identification, nevertheless it was plain enough that the poor girl had come from the steep descent in the ravine at the head of the bay and strolled toward the firm, smooth floor left by the receding tide. Half-way to it she had halted, then apparently returned a few paces, and there suddenly turned and run for the line of great boulders that strewed the foot of the sheer cliff, the nearest of the two giant black arms enclosing her.

This absurd turning and haste was so apparent that it was obvious something had intercepted her return and she had madly raced for the only shelter at hand. But not a third of the distance had been covered when a most astounding thing had happened, for the tracks vanished! Not a trace of her step was visible in the space of at least a dozen feet that lay between the last deep slurred indentation and the dead girl.

But for these two searchers the strange fact would have escaped notice, for at dawn the feet of many shocked friends had quite obliterated every trace of her movements. At the inquest the affair was sworn to by the discoverers, but excited little comment, for other even stranger matters occupied the attention of the astounded and baffled inquiry; yet to the two witnesses that void space, the visible evidence of a thing unknown and inconceivable, was the most appalling memory they retained. And for many a night they pondered over it and spoke darkly of things evil and malignant that of old they had heard their fathers' fathers declare roamed such desolate places; and the cheery lamplight within seemed more comforting than ever they had known it.

But men of learning and those skilled in the murky labyrinths of evil vainly sought to elucidate the matter; even a great surgeon from the city had willingly found time to assist at the autopsy, summoned by a wire from an humble country medico, who nevertheless in college had ranked higher than his famous chum. And in terms unintelligible to the lay mind the two had agreed and wrangled throughout one whole night, until the gray of dawn had sent the visitor hastening back to waiting patients. His last words as he pressed the starter were, "Thanks, Slater; the most amazing case I ever encountered—most interesting. But what the deuce caused it I haven't a notion."

As with an earlier verdict, those few curt words summed the facts the strictest probing had elicited. Well they might, for never a bruise or the least abrasion lay upon the poor body, yet of blood not a drop remained within it; and as in the case of young Symington the staggering complete-

ness of the extravasation was an anomaly to science, the tissues being disrupted in the selfsame violent manner, and every exposed surface of epidermis betraying a like eruptive disfigurement. Though the body was otherwise not mutilated, the examination was unhindered by the shocking maceration that Symington's corpse had suffered. In spite of this the verdict was identical: "Murder! but no evidence of how, or by whom committed."

AGAIN the great presses roared in their pangs of conceiving columns that dripped with adjectives and horror; and staider prints admitted frankly that the tragedy had really happened, and in them learned men penned articles that meandered through the dictionary, and seemed very wise and conclusive, but left the reader wondering what it was all about, yet oddly comforted that such men lived to deal with these ghastly enigmas as coolly and confidently as though the solution were concealed in tomes of algebra or differential calculus.

But the great public, whose emotions feed on simpler diet, just wondered, and thrilled with the horror of that strange, pitiless slaying, and throbbed with pity for an old, broken-hearted man mourning his only child; yet, lacking fuel to keep alight the gracious fire of sympathy, it shortly expired, just as reports of vast calamities in foreign lands flame dazzlingly for a moment in our mental firmament, then flicker and vanish as another star leaps above the horizon and outlives its predecessor.

Probably sooner or later there would have been other victims, and by chance some terror-stricken witness to afford humanity the first inkling of the gravest peril that has ever beset it. But it so happened that Philip Daimler, the talented painter, and his friend Richard Messinger, the well known curator of the geological section of the Jackson Institute, were the first to solve the mystery of the two terrible slayings, and in detail render an account of the fearful assailant—a relation that left humanity gasping and bewildered as we realized our impotence to combat the menace that now must be reckoned with. In a twinkling it had thrust our species back a hundred thousand years, to days when the survival of our hirsute ancestors trembled in the balance and only by a miracle escaped from the chaos of ravening monsters to become the dominant masters of their destiny. But now as well, or better, might we plan to clear the black depths of the oceans of the monstrous octopi that lurk a hundred fathoms below the surface invincible in their murky kingdom and calmly awaiting the diving leviathans or foundered floating palaces to appease their gargantuan appetites.

It might have been better had we never learnt the truth, never awakened to the fact that after all our thousands of years of striving, ceaseless war with ruthless creatures, pride of victory and attainment, after all we are not the lords of creation, and though in no danger of a world-wide catastrophe, yet neither science, police, nor politics can guarantee protection in the future to the individual. Now the serene cerulean dome has lost its divinity, for we know that merciless malignancy is hidden in its profundity; and the seductive peace of the green country, the charm of solitude, must forever be haunted by the dread of impending tragedy. Only surrounded by our fellows or with walls enclosing us can we know the security that once we lightly deemed our heritage.

The relation of their terrible experience is perhaps more vitally descriptive in the simple words of Messinger rather than the later careful summaries by the learned of the mere facts shorn of their emotional

reactions; just as a first impression often more truly portrays a scene than does a photograph.

"Daimler and I," said Messinger to the press representatives who rushed to the village early the following morning, "came here by car yesterday. As you know, Daimler's art is highly imaginative, though in detail truth itself; and for a canvas he desired to obtain some studies of the massive rock formations in this locality. I had been working rather strenuously of late—a little brochure on the sedimentaries—and feeling a trifle stale, came with him for a few days of rest and a mouthful of ozone.

"Naturally we were not ignorant of the tragic happenings that had occurred so recently in the neighborhood; but the victims being total strangers, and neither Daimler nor I of hypersensitive disposition, we hardly gave the matter a thought.

"Last evening, about two hours before sunset—my friend particularly desired to observe the evening effects—we set out for Ladner Bay; and though the road above would have been much the quicker route, yet the sloping shingle beach was preferable for Daimler's purpose.

"Daimler carried a small sketching-outfit and a light folding easel, while I had my old friend, a short-hafted prospector's pick which invariably accompanies me on these outings. Probably you know the tool—the head is shaped much like a small pick, but one prong has a flat hammer head. I think it weighs about five pounds, but in a practised hand a surprizingly powerful blow can be dealt with it.

"To this simple tool my friend owes his life; for, lacking it, I would have been quite powerless to aid him. As a matter of fact it was, I think, probably the best weapon that could have been devised for the purpose—the finest rifle would have been no more effective than a pea-shooter against that frightful thing.

"My friend had so frequently halted to admire some wild outline of crag or boulder that by the time we arrived at the bay the sun had dipped behind the western crest of the enclosing cliffs and that side lay in a fast-extending and deepening shade.

"The bay, I may remark, is a singularly picturesque one. It is about half a mile wide across its mouth and almost as much from low tide to the steep trail in the ravine where the great walls come together. In the bay the cliffs are higher than elsewhere and the strata more contorted; as though the spot had been the center of a violence that had thrown up miles of towering rock like a feather. Of course really the process was an infinitely prolonged one, the effect of vast strains and adjustments of the earth's envelope; nevertheless one can not avoid the impression of wrathful titanic forces unleashed and working instantaneously.

"High water seldom comes more than half-way over the smooth sands, and the huge, sheltering arms afford ample protection from the northerly gales that sometimes ravage this coast; therefore fishermen occasionally put in and wait until the blow is past. I believe the fine sands sometimes attract picnic parties, but otherwise it is as lonely a spot as can be found in a hundred miles of this coastline. The nearest house is more than a mile away and of course quite hidden from the beach; the road above is merely a rough country track and used only by a few farmers as a means of access to their widely separated neighbors. I believe one could camp for weeks in that lonely cove and never a soul be the wiser.

"Daimler was delighted with the wild grandeur of the spot—it was through my advice he had come—and for a little he flitted about from one point to another until the spirit moved him to set to work, while I made for the foot of the near-by massive wall and commenced busily with my pick to remove slabs from the face of it;

for in this formation not infrequently were to be found small fossils of mosses, lichens, and diminutive crustaceans.

"Some measure of success attending my labor, I became interested and immersed in the quest, and save for the waning light hardly noticed the passing of time until I found myself climbing the steep ascent that leads to the crest.

"This trail is merely the bottom of a great V-shaped gash that in the course of years has become partly filled with fallen fragments, and likely some day will be completely blocked by them. The way is extremely narrow, and not far from the beach it is for many yards a mere slit where two could hardly walk abreast; though for a sheer wall, maybe twenty feet high, on each side, the ramparts fall back and ascend in a series of giant steps.

"It was here that Daimler's cries first reached me, though he states that he had shouted several times before he heard my response; a fact for which a turn of the passage just below me and his rapid approach may be held accountable. At once I answered with a loud 'Halloo' and commenced quickly to retrace my steps. The only thought I held at the moment was that he had completed his sketch, and not seeing me about had called to inform me that it was time to return. We had previously agreed to return by the road, for in the dark the shingle would be rough walking.

"So intent had I been on my chipping that the gathering dusk had gone almost unnoticed. But now I realized that some time must have elapsed since I had left him; for as I turned the corner and the bay opened before me I saw that the scarlet and crimson of the horizon were fading, and though not a hundred yards distant his figure was blurred and only just recognizable.

"He was coming toward me quickly, in fact faster than I ever remembered seeing him move; for Daimler, though not grossly corpulent, is a big, heavy-built man, averse to rapid motion.

"At that second he called again, though I do not think he had yet seen me. He seemed to be walking in a crouching position, and his bent head was foreshortened to half its normal height above his broad shoulders. Although, as I have stated, his hastening form was somewhat blurred in the gathering dusk, yet his outline in the main was fairly well defined by the lighter-hued sands and sea that lay behind him.

"'What's the matter?' I cried sharply. The tone of his cry had surprized and startled me, it was so undeniably a cry of warning and agitation. But as I called back to him I was staring at something many feet away, a something that lay a hundred feet above him.

"I had perceived it directly I turned the bend in the trail, for it was quite impossible to miss its huge bulk. Yet one may perceive a strange and incomprehensible object without instantly grasping the enormity of its presence; we have lain so long in the rut of the known that our perceptions do not lightly rise out of it. Doubtless in the days of King Arthur they were quicker to accept and instantly tabulate the fantastic things they were taught quite commonly might be encountered; things which we dismiss with a smile as mere chimeras of ignorance and auto-suggestion. Yet now it occurs to me to wonder whether there is not a base of fact somewhere or other at the back of these dragons and ogres, centaurs and satyrs that they so often engaged in combat. For I feel certain that I, too, have seen a thing utterly opposed to sane credence, something abnormal, unknown and very horrible, yet as truly a fact as your presence at this moment.

"What I stared at was strange beyond imagining. Above him hovered —no other word quite conveys the instant impression I received of conscious movement—a something more resembling an appalling thundercloud condensed, or compressed, to an undreamt-of solidity, if such a phenomenon was possible, than anything else I can call to mind. In conveying to you a mental picture of this thing I am handicaped by having to describe something that has no counterpart in human experience and benumbs the brain with its staggering incomprehensibility.

"Viewed as a living entity it was enormous; I should judge fully thirty or forty feet in diameter, though its circumference was irregular and its outline so ragged that in many directions it might be much more than this figure. It seemed to rise from its edge to a dome center considerably higher than the stature of the hastening man beneath it; while underneath it appeared slightly hollowed.

"You understand I am giving you the sum of the impressions I retained after the encounter, and not merely my first instinctive observations; for it would be tedious, if not impossible, to separate my earlier impressions from later surety.

"At the moment my only emotion was amazement; though intertwined with my amazement there lay a shrinking, a loathing, of its abominable hue, which, save at the murky edges, was blacker than ink, or coal, or night—the black I should imagine we mean when in the phrase 'Black as Death itself' we endeavor to convey a profundity beyond all art to picture.

"Daimler of course heard me; in that quiet enclosed spot my voice seemed swollen unnaturally.

" 'Look out, Messinger! The thing is alive—it's going to attack, I think!' he cried hurriedly and breathlessly.

" 'Alive!' I exclaimed; and although instinctively I knew that it was indeed a living thing, yet the spoken word shocked me exceedingly. 'Nonsense! It's queer, but—quick, Daimler, run! It's dropping!' I shouted in a panic of sudden fear that strangely contradicted my curt refutation of his assertion.

"An instant realization of his great peril had come upon me as I saw the outlandish hovering thing that kept pace with his steps—by what means it moved I have no notion—abruptly fall for at least a third of the space between them. It fell just like a stone! No planing, or slanting swoop like a hawk at its quarry, but in a flash it was thirty feet lower, and the soughing swish of its passage was very audible.

"As I called, Daimler leapt forward and commenced a frantic dash toward me, and at the same second I rushed to meet him. Exactly how I expected to aid him I can not say, or indeed what manner of offensive I could summon in the slightest way effective against such a monstrous creature. The action was merely a blind impulse, the age-old urge of combination—the human species versus all comers.

"What this thing was dumfounded me, but I was convinced it was utterly malignant; for so close was it now that I glimpsed the sinuous rippling that agitated its ragged edge. The thing was visibly throbbing with vital life; even through the dusky pall I had seen that every inch of its surface was swelling, subsiding, and again heaving tumultuously with the apparently aimless convulsions of a gigantic bunch of knotted worms. Possibly part of this perception arose in a later impression; I can not be certain, for everything passed in a whirl in those tense seconds. But one detail I can state with certainty occurred in its rightful sequence: the sound that was emitted coincidently with its abrupt

descent. A thin, piping sighing filled the air around me, and though so thin and quavery, yet its volume seemed to saturate the vicinity like the whine of a horde of tiny mosquitoes. I can not recall that thereafter it ceased for a moment.

"DAIMLER when he started to run had not more than fifty yards to cross to gain whatever shelter the narrow trail could offer; yet before we met it happened. As I ran, my eyes never left the appalling thing, and I saw it quite clearly lessen in its area. There was no warning or any preliminary adjusting; it simply shrank, or rather contracted, as a length of slightly stretched elastic on release diminishes; and like it, this thing also thickened. Or perhaps in view of its concavity I might better liken the action to the half shutting of a huge umbrella.

"Then its huge mass had fallen and it lay exactly where Daimler had been running. For an instant I halted and stood staring blankly at the monstrous thing, just as one stares at an apparition—palsied with fear, mute and motionless. Then the enormity of the catastrophe that had overtaken Daimler flooded upon me and I hurled myself forward, frantically calling him by name.

"It seemed like circling a hill, for its summit rose many feet above me, and its height, I should judge, would be less than a third of the diameter. And all the time that queer piping sound was ceaselessly welling from it, only now in volume immensely greater and the note much shriller and more like the escaping of innumerable little jets of high-pressure steam.

"Behind that huge palpitating bulk lay Daimler on his back; head, arms and shoulders alone were visible; below this his form was missing, being covered by his assailant.

"He says that something impelled him at that critical second to hurl himself backward; likely it was an impulse, an emergence from the subconscious, the mysterious self that gains its knowledge from unknown channels. At any rate he hurtled backward, and instead of engulfing him the vast hood caught him a slanting blow and still further expedited his effort. Had it not been for this action, beyond any doubt he would have been instantly and most horribly smothered.

" 'I can't get clear—and it's moving up!' he gasped hoarsely as I rushed to him and slipping my hands beneath his armpits sought to snatch him from the loathsome thing. But with all my might, and with Daimler thrusting desperately at the sands, I could not by an inch release him, and beyond the slight natural flexion permitted to the human shoulders I failed to raise him appreciably.

"I stared at the monstrous thing as the cold sweat of terror poured profusely from me; but Daimler, though white and haggard, was, I think, much the cooler and more collected.

" 'I can't gain an inch! What shall I do?' I exclaimed hoarsely as I, too, saw that the revolting, glutinous-looking edge was extending farther over him. It seemed to flow with a rippling motion outward—the smooth creeping of a tide of festering slime more solid than liquid.

"Now the light was very dim but, the sky being cloudless, I could distinguish in a blurred, unreal fashion that the substance of the thing was still in a state of ceaseless pulsing fluxion; swelling into ridges and bosses, sinking in grooves and craters everywhere over a surface as coarsely wrinkled as the withered skin on the hands of age.

" 'For God's sake, Messinger, do something! It will be all over with me in a minute!' said Daimler tensely but quietly—I can not too highly rate his courage.

"In a frenzy of despair, my eyes swept the vicinity for anything—a piece of driftwood, a boulder even—

to batter this nightmare with. But the sands here were far above high water and bare of a single splinter, and the loose debris fringing the nearest cliff at least fifty feet distant; and at any second that ghastly living tide might sweep over its victim.

"Then my eye alighted on a weapon that somehow I had forgotten—the pick at my feet, where I had dropped it. These simple tools are marvels of efficiency and in a practised hand produce results; I do not doubt but with a single blow I could split the skull of an ox. In a second I had swung it aloft and at the extreme limit of my reach dealt the brute a savage stroke. It was indeed fortunate that I had not hit closer to the edge, for I might easily have seriously wounded if not slain my friend. The eight-inch prong went through the substance as though it were butter, and haft and hand were deeply pressed into a soft resilience.

"It was as flimsy as a sponge, or rather like hitting a cushion that would give but not rend before the mightiest fist, yet a child could drive a pin through it. At once there arose a series of little explosions such as might be made by the bursting of small air-filled paper bags or toy balloons.

"Astonished but elated by this unexpected vulnerability, instantly without raising the weapon I raked it down toward me. Thus attacked, it was more resistant, and I had to exert some force as if opposed by the strands of a half-rotten net. But I rent it to where the prong bit into the sand close beside Daimler. The deep laceration closed behind the steel like molten tar, and a line of grayish scum, greasy and frothy, welled out to mark the ravage.

" 'All right, Daimler, I'll have you clear in a moment!' I cried. 'It's as soft as a jelly-fish!' I cried exultingly as I feverishly plied my pick and with blow after blow roughly raked a great V-shaped wedge of it to tatters.

"Nevertheless, though I had spoken so assuredly, I was still in a state of panic. For the bulk of the thing was so appalling that my efforts seemed those of a pigmy assailing a whale with a bodkin: every second I expected to see some vast movement convulse it, some gigantic offensive that would erase us both as simply as my hand would crush a mosquito. Moreover each blow was meeting with a greater resistance, and if my attack was to be confined merely to stabbing the prong into it, then my friend was doomed to a certainty. For if I could not weaken it by scoring the portion that lay above him, I realized that there was no hope of saving him. So rigidly did this nightmare confine him that it seemed as if they were cemented together, or welded by suction like a glutinous limpet to a rock; and of course, in spite of its loose construction, this stupendous brute must have weighed tons.

"From start to finish, the whole experience could only have been a matter of moments, but to me the time seemed infinite.

"I ceased to attack the inner mass and confined my blows to the edge about the prisoner. It was much tougher, but I tore it to pieces for a couple of feet inward.

" 'Quick, Daimler! Put all your strength to it!' I cried, as, dropping the pick again, I caught him under the shoulders and strove to pull him from under. Whether unaided we would have been successful I can not say, but aid came from a most unexpected quarter.

"I suppose even that unnatural monster possessed the rudiments of feeling and its wounding reached some center of sensation; for suddenly it shook—one might better say 'shuddered'—violently, and there came a shrinking, a sort of retrogression of the wounded portion into itself; and a

wavelike shaking and rippling agitated the entire monster.

" 'It's loosening! Put every ounce of strength into it!' I gasped as I heaved desperately at the broad shoulders—and moved them! Swaying him from side to side, inch by inch I drew him clear to the waist; then abruptly resistance ceased and I went sprawling. He was free, and groaning and attempting to rise as I picked myself up and leapt to his side.

" 'Lean on me! We've got to reach the trail—it's the only shelter about here!' I panted, winded by my efforts and the fall.

"Somehow I got him standing, and with my arm about him we started, at a tangent to clear the throbbing horror, and made with all speed we could summon for the trail. Lurching and stumbling—for as I have said, Daimler is a big, heavy man, and now was badly shaken and benumbed by the pressure he had borne—we circled the brute; and though in the blurring dusk I had but a hasty glimpse of its black immensity, yet at once I saw that it had become even larger than a moment back and the throbbing had changed to a swaying motion that went from side to side. At once I guessed the truth.

" 'My God! Daimler, the brute is rising—we must go quicker!' I hoarsely whispered, somehow fearing that even a whisper would precipitate another attack.

"I heard the staggering man's breath indrawn with terror, and felt his form stiffen and strain to further effort, but a shambling amble was the utmost we could manage. My spirit fairly crawled within me as every step of that slow passage I felt that escape was impossible; and any second we might be dashed headlong with the blackness of unimaginable night and tons of living pulp smothering us.

"But at last, unharmed, we reached the ascent and staggered up until the walls closed in and we neared the narrow slit where I had been chipping and which now offered our only refuge. Here we halted for a moment.

" 'I think we are fairly safe now, thank heaven!' said I fervently as I peered back into the blur of the bay. Only a toneless pearly gray remained of the many-hued sunset. But one could distinguish quite well the cliffs, and the sands, and the darker band of sea beyond; and all that colorless expanse was solitary and nothing met the eye but the natural and the explainable.

" 'Why, it's gone!' I exclaimed in surprize and relief.

" 'No! Look up there, Messinger,' said Daimler in a shaking whisper as he clutched at my arm.

"I suppose by recent association of space and horror instinctively he had sought the quarter from which that horror had been born. I followed his lifted, pointing arm, and there floated the beast, level with the cliff crest and directly above us; and as I fearfully stared, it dropped a little lower and lay between the upper outflung sides of the gorge.

" 'It's coming down! Quick! into the shelter ahead!' I urged in a panic.

" 'Shelter! Where!' asked Daimler eagerly.

" 'Just above—the passage is so narrow, it couldn't reach us there,' I replied, regaining some confidence as I thought of the deep narrow cleft ahead.

"In a moment we had stumbled up the steep slope and stood between the sheer walls that for thirty or forty feet lay so close together that we could only just stand abreast and stare up at the thing that loomed so menacingly against the infinite gray behind it. But now I had less fear, for I felt it was impossible that such a huge mass could ever penetrate into our shelter; and probably the brute was of the same opinion, for it made no further attempt to attack us but

lay motionless for a few minutes as though gloomily pondering over the matter.

"Then in a flash it had gone; I had just an impression of a huge expansion like a roller-blind snatched across the sky, and then it was thousands of feet above us and appeared no larger than a tablecloth, and as harmless. In the flick of an eyelid followed another extension and instant diminution to a mere smudge that for an instant floated in profundity. And after that all trace of it vanished, and for a moment I was left awed by the imagination of prodigious heights and a lone monster fearlessly navigating the silent infinite void beyond.

" 'It's gone this time, anyway,' I heard Daimler mutter; and at his voice I returned to solid earth and things understandable.

" 'Yes, I hope forever to the hell it came from,' said I, savagely. 'But we'd better move before they cast it out with other stunts to try on us.'

"At once we climbed the steep ascent, and on the crest stood for an instant to ease the distress that now acutely beset Daimler. No longer spurred by imminent danger, he complained of pain and weakness in his limbs, faintness and dizziness, and would have lain on the rocks and coarse grass; but fearing the relaxation might incapacitate him I sternly refused to allow it.

"While we stood resting, my gaze wandered with loathing over the somber solitude that lay below us, and unbidden there came to me a thought of the poor girl who found death awaiting her in this treacherous loneliness—a tragedy which, as I now recalled, had never been solved, even as Daimler's fate if he had been solitary.

" 'My God! Of course—that nightmare from space!' I muttered, aghast at the thought of that horror. For I knew beyond a shadow of doubt that I had solved the mystery of Harriet Conroy's slaying.

" 'Come on, Daimler!' I urged hoarsely.

"THE rest of the story, gentlemen, is of no moment. Eventually we reached a farmhouse and secured a conveyance to this inn. Today my friend is confined to his bed, so bruised in limb and racked with nausea that I do not anticipate he will be fit to leave it for several days. The local man—Dr. Slater—assures me that save for shock and this severe bruising my friend is as sound as ever. But he awaits a friend of his, a famous specialist, with much impatience to learn his opinion. It seems that they collaborated in the examination of certain extraordinary phases at the poor girl's inquest recently; and with this new evidence on the matter he is anxious that I should meet him and relate our astounding and terrible experience. Moreover I understand that still another tragedy is linked with this locality. I mean the fate of young Symington—you know I am but little interested in such matters, being, I suppose, of skeptical temperament and completely immersed in my profession, and having no time to waste on the merely sensational; though I have some recollection of the affair, but very fragmentary and certainly nothing on which to found any conclusion of resemblance. Yet Dr. Slater assures me that our encounter with this unique assailant has forged the key to an otherwise inexplicable tragedy. Doubtless the whole matter will receive the closest official attention, even not improbably a world-wide investigation, and some definite conclusions and co-operation of offensive—if possible—be arrived at. For I can not conceive of a greater catastrophe to humanity than the existence in numbers of such monstrous, malignant creatures.

One shrinks appalled at the thought of their size, their powers and their immunity from detection.

"This new science of aviation? Why, one of those brutes could overwhelm a Zeppelin, and in a moment cast it a flaming heap of junk to destruction; and a dozen could clear the skies of every flying-machine the world could gather together, and make of aviation just another term for certain suicide. For how can one combat a creature that with the speed of a falling stone comes out of nothingness invisible until the darkness of death is smothering you?

"What this creature is I have no notion, whether a single survival of our planet's early abortions, or a type evolved in comparatively recent times, along a line and in an environment we, from inability to explore, have never thought of; these are enigmas that only research and further evidence can elucidate. All I know to a certainty is that my sense of peace and security has vanished for ever; the nature I have been wedded to, the lonely loveliness I have loved, now all is profitless—it is abhorrent! For what I have seen will dog my memory to my last day."

SUCH, deleting a few repetitions, was the narrative of Richard Messinger, and in the main is the extent of our knowledge today of the creature that popular misconception has christened "The Flying Death." For as yet no fresh witness has arisen to affirm or deny the particulars he has given.

Speculations, learned treatises, and discursive theories exist by the dozen, proving that the monster is mentioned allegorically in the Bible, or was known to the Chinese before Confucius, or has no existence—are there not persons who affirm that the world is flat and ignore the certain evidence to the contrary?

But the world has no doubt that this thing exists—a nightmare that can prey on humanity with the ease and impunity of a cat catching mice. For, immersed in alcohol in a glass jar in the great Metropolitan Museum, there lies one item of incontrovertible evidence of the creature's unique and terrorizing ability to destroy as it will and when it lists. And marveling crowds daily read the inscription beneath it.

Thus preserved for perpetuity lies a fragment, a mere strip—though originally somewhat larger, the vandals of science having wrought on it—the size of one's middle finger, that Messinger's pick had torn from the monster. In this liquid it looks exactly like a greasy, saturated sponge, of the coarse, dark-hued variety used in garages and for window cleaning. It was salvaged by a farmhand, who early on the spot the following morning had disturbed a horde of gulls which were screaming and squabbling on the sands above high water. Just in the nick of time he arrived to secure this morsel, the last of a banquet the feasters had been enjoying; consumed with the glory of his discovery he had straightway sought the authorities and turned it over, and finding his name mispelt in the papers had felt amply rewarded.

Lengthy and exhaustive examination of this fragment has resulted in some startling conclusions about the interior economy of its former owner, and its marvelous adaptation to altitudes so vast that the most daring aviator has never more than touched their fringe. We know for a certainty that its substance is as light and strong as a feather, elastic, and permeated by innumerable tiny cells, miniature bladders void of contents, connecting one with another by a network of small channels.

Primarily it was conceived that as with some species of fish these empty containers might be used for the storage of air to render the brute

buoyant, but this would in no way account for its superb powers of levitation in a like medium. Then under chemical analysis distinct traces of the gas hydrogen were found to be present. At once the secret was revealed. For this gas is the lightest of all the vapors and was used in all our great airships until helium, though heavier, was found to be safer, being non-inflammable. Undoubtedly this monster possesses the ability to separate the gas from the humid vapor always more or less present in our atmosphere. The process is probably of chemico-electric nature and instantaneous in action; which, though very astounding, is no more so than the extraction of oxygen from water with every inflating of the lungs of a fish.

Such an inflation of a tenuous elastic fabric would result in just such an instantaneous levitation as Messinger described; and when the hydrogen was expelled and the structure contracted, a falling stone would hardly drop quicker. The miracle lies really in the amazing control and nicety of manipulation of its medium of locomotion; but then all living creatures, save man, control their movements with a like perfection of accuracy.

By a little shrewd reasoning it has been deduced that its natural habitat is probably within the tropics where the humidity is greater than our latitudes; and for some unknown motive we have been visited by a lone strayer from its fellows: possibly the moment of the odd chance in a million that has peopled continents has dawned for their species.

It certainly is strange that all wild tribes dwelling near the equator are ridden by the fear of monstrous, shapeless, evil things that assail the night wanderer who at dawn is found lifeless and withered with the terror of that encounter. We have deemed these stories superstition; but the fear is a living force and must be based on something, to dominate millions as it does.

No explanation of the extraordinary mutilation of each of its victims has yet been advanced. All we can conceive is an organism endowed with a means of imbibing sustenance, much as a vastly magnified reproduction of the apparatus of the common mosquito—a lower surface with an infinite number of hairlike filaments, each the counterpart of that insect's proboscis and similarly provided with an irritant poison that draws the blood of a victim to the inserted borers.

But this is mere theory and may be right, or may be wrong, and well it will be for us if the truth is never known, and this the brute's last appearance; though several inexplicable disappearances have recently occurred among our flying men—craft and men have vanished from our world as though they had found another and been unable to return. And yet the daring adventurers fly still higher seeking the thing that dwells in the unknown beyond; and these missing craft may have encountered it.

"His cavernous eyes were fixed on the statuesque dead."

THE Signora Beatrice lay dead, perfumed and enshrouded, in the Junetime of her life; and the proud old Neapolitan, who had been her husband, sat near, dumb with the love of his young bride.

Silent forms passed in and out. They made no attempt at speech with the master of the palazzo; his look and attitude forbade it. Even the entrance of Carmina and the Countess Valeria, who had been very dear to the dead, drew from him no sign of recognition. They passed over to the bier and hung shaken with sobs above the beautiful form. Carmina, a tiny, passionate creature, stooped and touched the darkly fringed lids.

"Oh, I know, *carina*, these glorious eyes could not go on longer, smiling a lie; so you closed them forever. You were forced to give up Don Orlino for the wealth you despised. Now, all we have of you is this." Again she bent, and passionately kissed the cold, still face. "Why did you do it, darling, why, why?"

The countess tenderly slipped an arm about the hysterical girl and gently drew her from the death-chamber.

By some magnetic current, some miracle, an echo of the words reached the grief-stricken husband, hitherto deaf to all around him, and, had they two glanced back, they would have seen a changed man. His form stiff-

ened into a sudden erectness and flames leaped to his olive cheeks.

Don Orlino! Don Orlino! The name rang on his emptiness a deeper knell.

Ignoring her love for another, he had won through the pressure of her parents and claimed the hand of the radiantly beautiful Beatrice. He never dreamed, in his vanity and self-complacency, that the heart of his bride would yearn in the midst of the splendors he could provide, for the summer hours spent with her forsaken love. He took pride in her beauty, grace, and intellect. Rapidly and gloriously, for him, the days flew by. In his fevered happiness, he could not see the decline in his wife that was visible to all. The shock of her death froze his heart, and he, too, had been as one dead from that first dark instant, until the words of Carmina touched him like a flame from hell.

He strode across the room and gazed fiercely down on the lifeless eyes. All the blood in his body seemed striving for outlet at temples and throat.

"Say they so? Say they so?" His voice sounded strangely thin and sharp like the cut of a lash. "That Don Orlino had thus effectively snatched my heaven from me? If I believed it true, I would kill him—yes, kill him miserably." The words trailed away to a husky whisper.

After that, he no longer sat unnoticing. He eagerly scanned everyone who approached the lovely dead. But no soldier form with martial bearing entered to offer itself to a jealous husband's vengeance; and finally they laid the Signora Beatrice in the family vault without Don Orlino having looked on her dead face.

Daily Sardinossa wended his way to her resting-place and put fresh flowers on her satin shroud. This duty he reserved for himself alone; no other hand was allowed to touch the adored form. Agonizingly he waited for the first sign of the deadly decay. Those who served him feared for his reason, when it should make its appearance. But it tarried long, and, every day, new-blown flowers were necessary to match the surpassing loveliness of the dead woman's face.

Finally the strange truth was evident to all, and, with overwhelming joy, was borne in on the doting husband. She was petrifying. Petrifying! He cried the word aloud and asked in wild-eyed exultation, of those about him, if they realized that the ravaging worm had been held at bay; that the cycling stars could record no destruction of her beauty; that the face of his Beatrice would be his to look on, as long as life was allowed him. The vault became for him a shrine, and many trancelike hours were spent within its silent precincts.

One evil day the rumor reached him that the shrine had a rival devotee, that one came often during the reign of the full moon, who feasted long on the beauty of the dead bride's face. A horrible suspicion thrilled through him like the touch of a live wire, and mad passions, unleashed in his heart, rendered him deaf and dumb and blind.

That night the moon would be full. In a fever, he waited the waning of the day. He seemed hours within the moon-drenched tomb when, at last, a quick step without made him hastily regain his place of concealment behind a fluted column.

A key grated in the lock, and the stalwart young form of Don Orlino stood silhouetted in the entrance. Evidently he knew the exact moment to come, the moment when the moon would serve him, when no artificial light would be necessary, that might betray his tryst with the dead.

The moonbeams had just crept through the barred window and softly outlined the marble form. In its

light the white shroud shimmered and the still face shone wondrously, hauntingly beautiful.

Only the dawning of a ghastly, hideous determination kept the bereft husband from springing upon Don Orlino and choking him to death, as he watched him rain kisses on the beloved eyes and lips and hair. A fury of fiendish hate shook his heart almost audibly, as the minutes of the strange love-tryst waned, and there was a mad hilarity in his eyes as he watched the reluctant departure of Don Orlino.

He crept from the shadows and leaned, ghastly pale, above the shrouded corpse. All the love, all the worship, were gone from his eyes. Only a searing, withering hate for her, too, shone in them.

"So you went to him through death, as they said." The tremulous quavering of his tone manifested the descent of a sudden insanity. "Well, by the most terrible God, through death he shall go to you!"

The following day, and two thereafter, workmen were busy within the tomb, at a task over which they greatly wondered. What did the grand *signor* want with the carefully hewn-out niche in the vaulted wall and the heavy iron gate that enclosed it from ceiling to floor? Did he intend to place the gentle Signora Beatrice erect within it, after the fashion of the ancient Egyptians? Two shook their heads gravely over the contemplated desecration, but the third shrugged his shoulders indifferently and went on with his work, arguing that there was no accounting for the vagaries of the rich and powerful.

When their work was completed, Sardinossa came to look it over, and astounded the three with the munificence of his reward. A diabolical exultation swept over him as he tested the working of the iron gate. It swung to, swiftly, easily, with a click that spoke for the security of its fastenings. Then, consumed with a malignant eagerness, he watched the daylight die.

It is inconceivable with what satisfaction he dwelt on the carrying out of the horrible purpose that possessed him. He had a task before him, a diabolical task, which must be performed. His soul was on fire to accomplish it speedily and well.

MOONRISE found Sardinossa in the region of the tomb, and a smile, or rather, a hideous grimace, wrinkled his countenance, as Don Orlino's shadow fell long on the silvered grass. He allowed time for the caresses that maddened him, then moved in the direction of the tomb.

At the sound of his footstep, Don Orlino, surprized and startled, stood erect and faced the entrance. The two men stared at each other for a full half-minute.

Sardinossa was the first to break the silence. "Rather a tardy visit, this, Don Orlino. You never honored us so during the lady's lifetime." His voice was steady and betrayed no sign of the black purpose hidden in his soul.

"That it was impossible will always be counted my greatest regret," replied Don Orlino.

"One can readily believe that, who sees you take this time and this place to recompense yourself for impossible or neglected visits."

The biting sarcasm of his tone sent the hot blood to Don Orlino's face and warm words to his lips.

"Sardinossa, Beatrice was, as you know, once the dream of my life. If she ever was of yours, then you knew the ecstasy of its realization. This"—he pointed dramatically to the moon-bathed figure—"was its nearest fulfilment for me. Of course, I do not expect you to approve——"

"On the contrary," interrupted Sardinossa, "strange as it may seem, you will find that I shall expend spe-

cial effort in assisting you to a fuller realization of your dream. Do not think I shall forbid you the place. Indeed, you may consider it yours from tonight forth."

The tenseness of the voice, the cold light in the eye, like the flash of steel on steel, the ominous calm before the storm—all were lost on Don Orlino in the joy of the privilege granted. His cherished love, with its mingled grief and pain, made him, the soldier and strategist, like an unsuspecting child in the hands of this finished master of cunning.

"They tell me you come always at night, when the moon is full." Sardinossa's cold, even voice again woke the echoes of the tomb.

Don Orlino started. Sardinossa had been aware, then, of the stolen vigils. For the first time, Don Orlino, somewhat distrustful of the apparent calm, searched Sardinossa's face for a sign of suppressed passion, but it was bland, smiling.

"I thought, perhaps," the almost sarcastic tones went on, "the moon might enhance charms already more than heart-breaking, so I came to see."

"That were impossible," Don Orlino returned passionately. "Beatrice was, and remains, beautiful in all lights, at all times. I come at night because she gave you the right to come in the daylight, to love, to adore before men. For me, she left only this tryst in the tomb, these stolen moments. Can you not understand? Can you not pity?"

The old eyes flamed with a horrid mirth. "Yes, I can understand, I can pity. You will not long be without an evidence of the fact." A short, hard laugh finished the remark. Evidently the laugh was involuntary and instantly regretted, for he went on with an undue haste and overdone affability. "Of one thing I have assured myself: that the cold, damp atmosphere of the vault at night is not for the old. It has stiffened my knees painfully." He stooped and pressed them in a helpless manner. "My stick, I left it there." He pointed toward the newly made niche at the foot of the casket.

Don Orlino sprang in the direction indicated and felt about for the stick. Unable to find it, he moved closer to the wall and felt about more carefully.

Like a flash, the old form unbent, and, with the speed of a tiger in action, Sardinossa had crossed the little space and swung shut the gate on his victim.

Startled, Don Orlino struggled about in the narrow enclosure and faced a fiend incarnate. Blue lightnings leaped from Sardinossa's gloating eyes, and his voice was like the taunt of a demon.

"Now realize to the full your dream—look your fill." Sardinossa spat out the words. "You see I have placed you conveniently at her feet, and when the extremity of hunger and thirst begins to burn and torture, curse her, curse love, curse God, and die."

He darted a final glance of undying hate at Don Orlino, who stood, magnificently defiant, like an American Indian at the torture. Going out, he locked the tomb and turned his back on it forever.

YEARS after, when the body of Sardinossa was brought home from a foreign land for burial, those who entered the tomb with the remains shrank back in terror. There were sharp cries. With a thud that echoed dismally, the coffin slipped from their trembling hands; and, powerless to withdraw their eyes, they gazed with unutterable horror on the ghastly monument Sardinossa had raised to the green-eyed monster.

Behind the bars of the gate, gleaming white and ghostly, and hung with

tatters of moldering garments, was the skeleton of Don Orlino.

His cavernous eyes were fixed on the statuesque dead, and dangling down against the protruding ribs, just where the noble heart once beat, was an ivory miniature of the laughing girl-face of the lady of his worship.

Folks Used to Believe

by ALVIN F. HARLOW

The Fairy Court

THE people of the Middle Ages supposed those imaginary beings whom they called fairies to be organized into a kingdom, just as were human peoples. Oberon was their king. By many writers he was claimed to be the offspring of Julius Cæsar and a fairy usually known as Morgan le Fay, though the Italians called her Fata Morgana. It was probably from this union that the term, "morganatic marriage," originally meaning a marriage of two people in widely different spheres, originated.

In old British legend, however, Morgan le Fay was a sister of the mythical King Arthur, and had her home in that beautiful Isle of Avalon, where souls leaving earth were restored to eternal youth. She was the one who revealed to Arthur the intrigue of his wife, Guinevere, with Lancelot. In Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (early Sixteenth Century), Fata Morgana is represented as dispensing all the treasures of earth, and as inhabiting a palace at the bottom of a lake. The Italians still give the name Fata Morgana to the mirages which appear on their coast.

There is some disagreement over the name of Oberon's queen. Some earlier writers give her name as Mab, but the bulk of the evidence seems to be that Queen Mab was the fairies' midwife—that is, the fairy whose duty it is to deliver the fancies of men and to cause dreams by pinching the sleeper, whispering in his ear or driving over him in her chariot. Shakespeare represents her as not only adept in teasing and mischief, but as the hag Nightmare in person. Spenser, in his *Faerie Queene,* gives the queen's name as Gloriana. In later years, Titania is mentioned as the queen, though Shakespeare is the first writer known to have used this name.

In Poole's *Parnassus* (1657), the persons of the fairy court are given as follows: Oberon the Emperor, Mab the Empress; Periwiggin, Perriwinckle, Puck, Hob-goblin, Tomalin, Tom Thumb were the courtiers; Hop, Mop, Drop, Pip, Skip, Tub, Tib, Tick, Pink, Pin, Quick, Gill, Im, Tit, Wap, Win and Nit were the maids of honor, and Nymphidia the mother of the maids. Puck, a very humorous, mischievous elf, is often represented as the court jester. He is the same sprite known in the British Isles as Robin Goodfellow, Will-o'-the-Wisp, and even by other names.

A Short Ghost-Story

THE TENANT AT NUMBER SEVEN

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

MR. JOHN PADDON got onto the car at Charing Cross station and settled himself for a long ride into the northern part of the city. Mr. Paddon was an antiquary, and he had only just now closed his shop, having had to keep open much longer than usual to satisfy the whim of a late customer, who had, after all, bought scantily. A small, mean-looking man, Mr. Paddon reflected, who had begged him to sell him the grotesque medallion at a lower price than the tag called for. Mr. Paddon's thoughts revolved about the man, and from him moved very naturally to the Roman medallion, found, it was said, at York. Mr. Paddon had his doubts, for he was inclined to regard all antiques with a dubious eye; but, after all, it was not really his business whether they were antiques or not.

It was not often that Mr. Paddon took a late underground. When he thought of how late he would get home he made a grimace of annoyance. At the same moment he looked up and came face to face with his late customer. Mr. Paddon wondered whether he should nod; the customer, however, made no sign of recognition. The man was decidedly mean-looking, Mr. Paddon observed uneasily. Almost unconsciously he began to wish that he had sold him the medallion, even at the risk of a slight loss. He resolved to keep a careful eye on the man.

However, it was soon evident that the customer either did not remember Mr. Paddon, or did not wish to do so. Mr. Paddon's apprehension left him, and he began to scrutinize the man. He smiled discreetly at the beaver hat and the old-fashioned square spectacles, and followed the heavy black muffler from the man's throat to where it stuck out below his shabby jacket. The face above the muffler looked very old, but the thin lips were firm, and the tuft of grizzled hair on the chin was not totally white. The small eyes behind the spectacles were black. The nose was sharply aquiline, and Mr. Paddon found himself wondering how the man would look if it were slightly curved.

Quite suddenly the man looked up and stared fully at Mr. Paddon. The antiquary immediately buried his head in the *Times*. In a moment he looked cautiously over the top of the paper and found his late customer still regarding him thoughtfully. Mr. Paddon bent again to his paper; nor did he look up again until the motorman called out his station.

Mr. Paddon discovered that his late customer was also leaving the underground at St. John's Wood Road. At once his apprehension seized Mr. Paddon again. He decided hurriedly that if the man should come back to the shop on the following day he should have the medallion at his price. But when

Mr. Paddon stepped from the car he was alone; there was no one about. For a moment the antiquary entertained the idea that the man was about to ambush him, but he immediately dismissed it as absurd, and walked home.

THE following day was foggy. The air was uncomfortably heavy, and drops of water came out of the yellow and gray mist and struck Mr. Paddon as he walked swiftly from the station to his antique shop. He entered his shop with a sigh of relief, and closed the door hastily to shut out the fog that billowed inward. He drew off his gloves, and put them, together with his cane, on the counter. His greatcoat and hat he hung on a convenient suit of armor near the door. Then he settled himself on a stool behind the counter, put on his spectacles, and assumed an air of great importance. Hardly had he done so, when he discovered, not three feet from him, the customer of the night before.

Mr. Paddon stared at him for a moment, as if unable to comprehend his appearance. It was almost as if he had materialized from the suit of armor near the door, toward which Mr. Paddon involuntarily looked. Mr. Paddon had not heard the door open. With a half-apologetic smile, the antiquary returned his attention to his customer.

"Well, sir," he began, "I suppose you've come after that medallion?"

"If I could have it for five pounds, sir, I'd take it." The man's face did not change; he stared steadily at Mr. Paddon.

"Well, sir, I'd about decided last night that you could have it at five pounds—though it's a sacrifice, sir, and I'll never do it again."

The customer's expression did not change.

"But," continued Mr. Paddon, somewhat flustered, "I don't suppose I'd ever have the chance to sell it again for some time; so it's just as well that it goes. By the way, what is your name?"

"Gaunt. Benjamin Gaunt."

"And address?"

"Seven, St. John's Wood Terrace."

"It's just in case of something turning up regarding it—you can't ever tell in this business. It's always better to have a record."

Mr. Paddon placed the medallion on the counter and reached for paper in which to wrap it. The customer reached for the medallion.

"You needn't wrap it; I'll take it just this way."

"As you please, sir." Mr. Paddon smiled; the customer nodded curtly and deposited several coins upon the counter. Then he turned and walked quickly to the door. Mr. Paddon took up the coins. The door closed softly.

Mr. Paddon stopped in the act of depositing the coins in the register to look at them more closely. They were coins of Queen Victoria. He glanced to where Mr. Gaunt had rested against the counter. There were no marks there—nothing at all to indicate that Mr. Gaunt's clothing had been dampened by the London mists.

THE door of Mr. Paddon's antique shop opened to admit a middle-aged man, who entered with a great bustle and noise, and almost knocked Mr. Paddon's walking-stick from the suit of armor. From a pocket of his greatcoat he took a catalogue, which Mr. Paddon recognized as one that he had sent out some days before. Mr. Paddon eyed his customer over his spectacles, and fixed a benevolent stare on his visitor's chubby red cheeks.

"Mr. Paddon," the customer began, "I'm James Conroyd—you've got my name on your mailing-list. Some days ago you sent out a catalogue in which you describe a Roman medallion—the particular medallion

that I've been searching for half my life. I've good reason to believe that it's the very medallion I lost years ago. Where did you get hold of it, by the way?"

"Why, I—I haven't any idea, Mr. Conroyd. Perhaps I could look it up, but it's pretty hard to keep account."

"Never mind. Let me see it, will you?"

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Paddon, looking rather futile, "but I sold it not ten minutes ago."

Mr. Conroyd opened his eyes wide. "You sold it? To whom, if I may ask?"

"To a Mr. Benjamin Gaunt."

"Why, that's the man I bought it from! The only other man who was looking for the medallion gets here before I do! You see, Mr. Paddon, some years ago, when I was little more than a kid, I bought the thing from Gaunt for five pounds."

"That's what I sold it to him for!"

"That's a coincidence. After I'd bought it from him, he was continually pestering me to sell it back to him. I never would have sold it to him. But one day I lost it." Suddenly Mr. Conroyd's face underwent a change. He stared at Mr. Paddon, who smiled respectfully. Then suddenly his face flushed angrily. "Say, listen! I don't know what your idea is, but you faked this fellow's name. Benjamin Gaunt died five years ago!"

Mr. Paddon looked his dismay. He felt suddenly horribly useless, and hastened to assure Mr. Conroyd that he had sold the medallion to Mr. Benjamin Gaunt.

"No, no, Mr. Conroyd. I sold it to a man who gave me that name."

"Did he give you his address?" asked Mr. Conroyd, his eyes narrowing in suspicion.

"Yes. It's seven, St. John's Wood Terrace."

"Could you go out there with me, Mr. Paddon? I'm bound to have that medallion—no matter what I pay for it."

"Well?"

"I'll pay you for your time."

Mr. Paddon looked dubiously at the fog outside, then back at his eager visitor. "Yes," he said, "I'll go."

Seven, St. John's Wood Terrace, was not difficult to find. Everyone seemed to know of it, and when the antiquary and his customer asked about it, they were treated to curious stares, and in some cases, discreet smiles. Seven, St. John's Wood Terrace, was a deserted house in its last stages. Not a window-pane remained in the ramshackle structure, and there were no doors. The shingles were green with moss, and the chimney had crumbled long before. There was no longer a discernible path leading to the door.

"Well," said Mr. Paddon, "should we go in?"

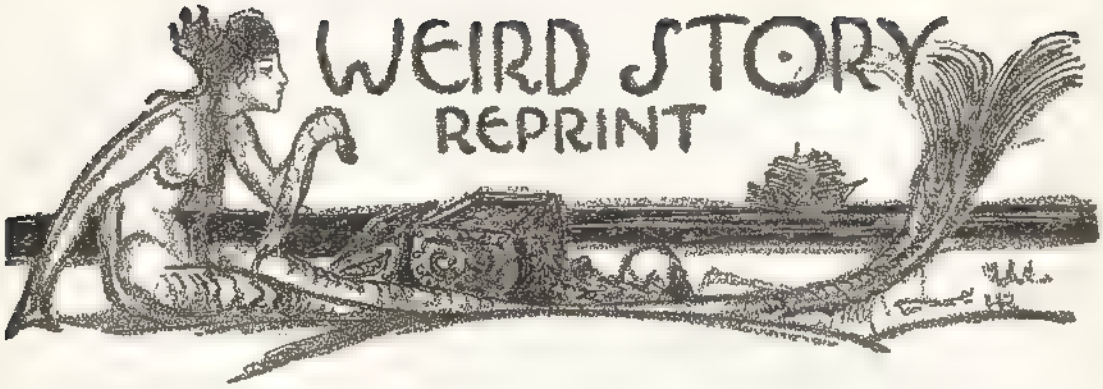
"I suppose we might as well, seeing we've come this far."

The two men hesitated a moment, and looked about them and back at the house, before they walked slowly up to the structure. They entered. Their footprints broke into the dust of years as they went from room to room.

In a little chamber in the back of the house Mr. Conroyd found the Roman medallion. On the table were marks disturbing the dust, where the medallion had been thrown. In one corner of the room lay an old beaver hat, damaged beyond repair. There were no footprints in the room, nor could the men find where the medallion had entered.

"Certainly Benjamin Gaunt's," said Mr. Conroyd, picking up the hat.

Quite near the table, covered with dust, Mr. Paddon noticed a black muffler. Some distance away lay all that was left of a pair of square spectacles.



The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

By WASHINGTON IRVING

IN THE bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent the eastern shore of the Hudson, at that broad expansion of the river denominated by the ancient Dutch navigators the Tappan Zee, and where they always prudently shortened sail, and implored the protection of St. Nicholas when they crossed, there lies a small market-town or rural port, which by some is called Greensburgh, but which is more generally and properly known by the name of Tarry Town. This name was given, we are told, in former days, by the good housewives of the adjacent country, from the inveterate propensity of their husbands to linger about the village tavern on market days. Be that as it may, I do not vouch for the fact, but merely advert to it, for the sake of being precise and authentic. Not far from this village, perhaps about two miles, there is a little village, or rather lap of land, among high hills, which is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small brook glides through it, with just murmur enough to lull one to repose; and the occasional whistle of a quail, or tapping of a woodpecker, is almost the only sound that ever breaks in upon the uniform tranquillity.

I recollect that, when a stripling, my first exploit in squirrel-shooting was in a grove of tall walnut-trees that shades one side of the valley. I had wandered into it at noontime, when all nature is peculiarly quiet, and was startled by the roar of my own gun, as it broke the Sabbath stillness around, and was prolonged and reverberated by the angry echoes. If ever I should wish for a retreat, whither I might steal from the world and its distractions, and dream quietly away the remnant of a troubled life, I know of none more promising than this little valley.

From the listless repose of the place, and the peculiar character of its inhabitants, who are descendants from the original Dutch settlers, this sequestered glen has long been known by the name of Sleepy Hollow, and its rustic lads are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys throughout all the neighboring country. A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land, and to pervade the very atmosphere. Some say that the place was bewitched by a high German doctor, during the early days of the settlement; others, that an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe, held his powwows there before the country was discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson. Certain it is, the place still con-

tinues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual revery. They are given to all kinds of marvelous beliefs; are subject to trances and visions; and frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighborhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions; stars shoot and meteors glare oftener across the valley than in any other part of the country, and the nightmare, with her whole ninefold, seems to make it the favorite scene of her gambols.

The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander-in-chief of all the powers of the air, is the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the revolutionary war; and who is ever and anon seen by the country folk, hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wings of the wind. His haunts are not confined to the valley, but extend at times to the adjacent roads, and especially to the vicinity of a church at no great distance. Indeed, certain of the most authentic historians of these parts, who have been careful in collecting and collating the floating facts concerning this specter, allege that the body of the trooper, having been buried in the churchyard, the ghost rides forth to the scene of battle in nightly quest of his head; and that the rushing speed with which he sometimes passes along the Hollow, like a midnight blast, is owing to his being belated, and in a hurry to get back to the churchyard before daybreak.

Such is the general purport of this legendary superstition, which has furnished materials for many a wild story in that region of shadows; and the specter is known, at all the country firesides, by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

It is remarkable that the visionary propensity I have mentioned is not confined to the native inhabitants of the valley, but is unconsciously imbibed by everyone who resides there for a time. However wide awake they may have been before they entered that sleepy region, they are sure, in a little time, to inhale the witching influence of the air, and begin to grow imaginative—to dream dreams, and see apparitions.

I mention this peaceful spot with all possible laud; for it is in such little retired Dutch valleys, found here and there embosomed in the great State of New York, that population, manners, and customs, remain fixed; while the great torrent of migration and improvement, which is making such incessant changes in other parts of this restless country, sweeps by them unobserved. They are like those little nooks of still water which border a rapid stream; where we may see the straw and bubble riding quietly at anchor, or slowly revolving in their mimic harbor, undisturbed by the rush of the passing current. Though many years have elapsed since I trod the drowsy shades of Sleepy Hollow, yet I question whether I should not still find the same trees and the same families vegetating in its sheltered bosom.

In this by-place of nature, there abode, in a remote period of American history, that is to say, some thirty years since, a worthy wight of the name of Ichabod Crane; who sojourned, or, as he expressed it, "tarried," in Sleepy Hollow, for the purpose of instructing the children of the vicinity. He was a native of Connecticut; a state which supplies the Union with pioneers for the mind as well as for the forest, and sends forth yearly its legions of frontier woodsmen and country schoolmasters. The cognomen of Crane was not inap-

plicable to his person. He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weathercock, perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield.

His schoolhouse was a low building of one large room rudely constructed of logs; the windows partly glazed, and partly patched with leaves of old copy-books. It was most ingeniously secured at vacant hours, by a withe twisted in the handle of the door, and stakes set against the window shutters; so that, though a thief might get in with perfect ease, he would find some embarrassment in getting out; an idea most probably borrowed by the architect, Yost Van Houten, from the mystery of an eel-pot. The schoolhouse stood in a rather lonely but pleasant situation, just at the foot of a woody hill, with a brook running close by, and a formidable birch tree growing at one end of it. From hence the low murmur of his pupils' voices, conning over their lessons, might be heard in a drowsy summer's day, like the hum of a beehive; interrupted now and then by the authoritative voice of the master, in the tone of menace or command; or, peradventure, by the appalling sound of the birch, as he urged some tardy loiterer along the flowery path of knowledge. Truth to say, he was a conscientious man, and ever bore in mind the golden maxim, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." — Ichabod Crane's scholars certainly were not spoiled.

I would not have it imagined, however, that he was one of those cruel potentates of the school, who joy in the smart of their subjects; on the contrary, he administered justice with discrimination rather than severity; taking the burthen off the backs of the weak, and laying it on those of the strong. Your mere puny stripling, that winced at the least flourish of the rod, was passed by with indulgence; but the claims of justice were satisfied by inflicting a double portion on some little, tough, wrong-headed, broad-skirted Dutch urchin, who sulked and swelled and grew dogged and sullen beneath the birch. All this he called "doing his duty by their parents"; and he never inflicted a chastisement without following it by the assurance, so consolatory to the smarting urchin, that "he would remember it, and thank him for it the longest day he had to live."

When school hours were over, he was even the companion and playmate of the larger boys; and on holiday afternoons would convoy some of the smaller ones home, who happened to have pretty sisters, or good housewives for mothers, noted for the comforts of the cupboard. Indeed it behooved him to keep on good terms with his pupils. The revenue arising from his school was small, and would have been scarcely sufficient to furnish him with daily bread, for he was a huge feeder, and though lank, had the dilating powers of an anaconda; but to help out his maintenance, he was, according to country custom in those parts, boarded and lodged at the houses of the farmers, whose children he instructed. With these he lived successively a week at a time; thus going the rounds of the neighborhood, with all his worldly effects tied up in a cotton handkerchief.

That all this might not be too onerous on the purses of his rustic patrons, who are apt to consider the costs of schooling a grievous burden, and schoolmasters as mere drones, he had

various ways of rendering himself both useful and agreeable. He assisted the farmers occasionally in the lighter labors of their farms; helped to make hay; mended the fences; took the horses to water; drove the cows from pasture; and cut wood for the winter fire. He laid aside, too, all the dominant dignity and absolute sway with which he lorded it in his little empire, the school, and became wonderfully gentle and ingratiating. He found favor in the eyes of the mothers, by petting the children, particularly the youngest; and like the lion bold, which whilom so magnanimously the lamb did hold, he would sit with a child on one knee, and rock a cradle with his foot for whole hours together.

In addition to his other vocations, he was the singing-master of the neighborhood, and picked up many bright shillings by instructing the young folks in psalmody. It was a matter of no little vanity to him, on Sundays, to take his station in front of the church gallery, with a band of chosen singers; where, in his own mind, he completely carried away the palm from the parson. Certain it is, his voice resounded far above all the rest of the congregation; and there are peculiar quavers still to be heard in that church, and which may even be heard half a mile off, quite to the opposite side of the mill-pond, on a still Sunday morning, which are said to be legitimately descended from the nose of Ichabod Crane. Thus, by divers little makeshifts in that ingenious way which is commonly denominated "by hook and by crook," the worthy pedagogue got on tolerably enough, and was thought, by all who understood nothing of the labor of headwork, to have a wonderfully easy life of it.

The schoolmaster is generally a man of some importance in the female circle of a rural neighborhood; being considered a kind of idle gentlemanlike personage, of vastly superior taste and accomplishments to the rough country swains, and, indeed, inferior in learning only to the parson. His appearance, therefore, is apt to occasion some little stir at the tea-table of a farmhouse, and the addition of a supernumerary dish of cakes or sweetmeats, or, peradventure, the parade of a silver teapot. Our man of letters, therefore, was peculiarly happy in the smiles of all the country damsels. How he would figure among them in the churchyard, between services on Sundays! gathering grapes for them from the wild vines that overran the surrounding trees; reciting for their amusement all the epitaphs on the tombstones; or sauntering, with a whole bevy of them, along the banks of the adjacent mill-pond; while the more bashful country bumpkins hung sheepishly back, envying his superior elegance and address.

From his half itinerant life, also, he was a kind of traveling gazette, carrying the whole budget of local gossip from house to house; so that his appearance was always greeted with satisfaction. He was, moreover, esteemed by the women as a man of great erudition, for he had read several books quite through, and was a perfect master of Cotton Mather's history of New England witchcraft, in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed.

He was, in fact, an odd mixture of small shrewdness and simple credulity. His appetite for the marvelous, and his powers of digesting it, were equally extraordinary; and both had been increased by his residence in this spellbound region. No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow. It was often his delight, after his school was dismissed in the afternoon, to stretch himself on the rich bed of clover, bordering the little brook that whimpered by his schoolhouse, and there con over old Mather's direful tales, until the gathering dusk of the evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes. Then, as he wended his way,

by swamp and stream and awful woodland, to the farmhouse where he happened to be quartered, every sound of nature, at that witching hour, fluttered his excited imagination: the moan of the whippoorwill from the hill-side; the boding cry of the tree-toad, that harbinger of storm; the dreary hooting of the screech-owl, or the sudden rustling in the thicket of birds frightened from their roost. The fireflies, too, which sparkled most vividly in the darkest places, now and then startled him, as one of uncommon brightness would stream across his path; and if, by chance, a huge blockhead of a beetle came winging his blundering flight against him, the poor varlet was ready to give up the ghost, with the idea that he was struck with a witch's token. His only resource on such occasions, either to drown thought, or drive away evil spirits, was to sing psalm tunes;—and the good people of Sleepy Hollow, as they sat by their doors of an evening, were often filled with awe, at hearing his nasal melody, "in linkèd sweetness long drawn out," floating from the distant hill, or along the dusky road.

Another of his sources of fearful pleasure was to pass long winter evenings with the old Dutch wives, as they sat spinning by the fire, with a row of apples roasting and spluttering along the hearth, and listen to their marvelous tales of ghosts and goblins, and haunted fields, and haunted brooks, and haunted bridges, and haunted houses, and particularly of the headless horseman, or galloping Hessian of the Hollow, as they sometimes called him. He would delight them equally by his anecdotes of witchcraft, and of the direful omens and portentous sights and sounds in the air, which prevailed in the earlier times of Connecticut; and would frighten them wofully with speculations upon comets and shooting stars; and with the alarming fact that the world did absolutely turn round, and that they were half the time topsy-turvy!

But if there was a pleasure in all this, while snugly cuddling in the chimney corner of a chamber that was all of a ruddy glow from the crackling wood fire, and where, of course, no specter dared to show his face, it was dearly purchased by the terrors of his subsequent walk homewards. What fearful shapes and shadows beset his path amidst the dim and ghastly glare of a snowy night!—With what wistful look did he eye every trembling ray of light streaming across the waste fields from some distant window!—How often was he appalled by some shrub covered with snow, which, like a sheeted specter, beset his very path!—How often did he shrink with curdling awe at the sound of his own steps on the frosty crust beneath his feet; and dread to look over his shoulder, lest he should behold some uncouth being tramping close behind him!—And how often was he thrown into complete dismay by some rushing blast, howling among the trees, in the idea that it was the Galloping Hessian on one of his nightly scourings!

All these, however, were mere terrors of the night, phantoms of the mind that walk in darkness; and though he had seen many specters in his time, and been more than once beset by Satan in divers shapes, in his lonely perambulations, yet daylight put an end to all these evils; and he would have passed a pleasant life of it, in despite of the devil and all his works, if his path had not been crossed by a being that causes more perplexity to mortal man than ghosts, goblins, and the whole race of witches put together, and that was—a woman.

Among the musical disciples who assembled, one evening in each week, to receive his instructions in psalmody, was Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter and only child of a substantial Dutch farmer. She was a blooming lass of fresh eighteen;

plump as a partridge; ripe and melting and rosy-cheeked as one of her father's peaches, and universally famed, not merely for her beauty, but her vast expectations. She was withal a little of a coquette, as might be perceived even in her dress, which was a mixture of ancient and modern fashions, as most suited to set off her charms. She wore the ornaments of pure yellow gold, which her great-great-grandmother had brought over from Saardam; the tempting stomacher of the olden time; and withal a provokingly short petticoat, to display the prettiest foot and ankle in the country round.

Ichabod Crane had a soft and foolish heart towards the sex; and it is not to be wondered at, that so tempting a morsel soon found favor in his eyes; more especially after he had visited her in her paternal mansion. Old Baltus Van Tassel was a perfect picture of a thriving, contented, liberal-hearted farmer. He seldom, it is true, sent either his eyes or his thoughts beyond the boundaries of his own farm; but within those everything was snug, happy, and well-conditioned. He was satisfied with his wealth, but not proud of it; and piqued himself upon the hearty abundance, rather than the style in which he lived. His stronghold was situated on the banks of the Hudson, in one of those green, sheltered, fertile nooks, in which the Dutch farmers are so fond of nestling. A great elm-tree spread its broad branches over it; at the foot of which bubbled up a spring of the softest and sweetest water, in a little well, formed of a barrel; and then stole sparkling away through the grass, to a neighboring brook, that bubbled along among alders and dwarf willows. Hard by the farmhouse was a vast barn, that might have served for a church; every window and crevice of which seemed bursting forth with the treasures of the farm; the flail was busily resounding within it from morning to night; swallows and martins skimmed twittering about the eaves; and rows of pigeons, some with one eye turned up, as if watching the weather, some with their heads under their wings, or buried in their bosoms, and others swelling, and cooing, and bowing about their dames, were enjoying the sunshine on the roof. Sleek unwieldy porkers were grunting in the repose and abundance of their pens; whence sallied forth, now and then, troops of sucking pigs, as if to snuff the air. A stately squadron of snowy geese were riding in an adjoining pond, convoying whole fleets of ducks; regiments of turkeys were gobbling through the farmyard, and guinea-fowls fretting about it, like ill-tempered housewives, with their peevish discontented cry. Before the barn door strutted the gallant cock, that pattern of a husband, a warrior, and a fine gentleman, clapping his burnished wings, and crowing in the pride and gladness of his heart—sometimes tearing up the earth with his feet, and then generously calling his ever-hungry family of wives and children to enjoy the rich morsel which he had discovered.

The pedagogue's mouth watered, as he looked upon this sumptuous promise of luxurious winter fare. In his devouring mind's eye, he pictured to himself every roasting-pig running about with a pudding in his belly, and an apple in his mouth; the pigeons were snugly put to bed in a comfortable pie, and tucked in with a coverlet of crust; the geese were swimming in their own gravy; and the ducks pairing cosily in dishes, like snug married couples, with a decent competency of onion sauce. In the porkers he saw carved out the future sleek side of bacon, and juicy relishing ham; not a turkey but he beheld daintily trussed up, with its gizzard under its wing, and, peradventure, a necklace of savory sausages; and even bright chanticleer himself lay sprawling on his back, in a side-dish, with

uplifted claws, as if craving that quarter which his chivalrous spirit disdained to ask while living.

As the enraptured Ichabod fancied all this, and as he rolled his great green eyes over the fat meadow-lands, the rich fields of wheat, of rye, of buckwheat, and Indian corn, and the orchards burthened with ruddy fruit, which surrounded the warm tenement of Van Tassel, his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these domains, and his imagination expanded with the idea, how they might be readily turned into cash, and the money invested in immense tracts of wild land, and shingle palaces in the wilderness. Nay, his busy fancy already realized his hopes, and presented to him the blooming Katrina, with a whole family of children, mounted on the top of a wagon loaded with household trumpery, with pots and kettles dangling beneath; and he beheld himself bestriding a pacing mare, with a colt at her heels, setting out for Kentucky, Tennessee, or the Lord knows where.

When he entered the house the conquest of his heart was complete. It was one of those spacious farmhouses, with high-ridged, but lowly sloping roofs, built in the style handed down from the first Dutch settlers; the low projecting eaves forming a piazza along the front, capable of being closed up in bad weather. Under this were hung flails, harness, various utensils of husbandry, and nets for fishing in the neighboring river. Benches were built along the sides for summer use; and a great spinning-wheel at one end, and a churn at the other, showed the various uses to which this important porch might be devoted. From this piazza the wondering Ichabod entered the hall, which formed the center of the mansion and the place of usual residence. Here, rows of resplendent pewter, ranged on a long dresser, dazzled his eyes. In one corner stood a huge bag of wool ready to be spun; in another a quantity of linsey-woolsey just from the loom; ears of Indian corn, and strings of dried apples and peaches, hung in gay festoons along the walls, mingled with the gaud of red peppers; and a door left ajar gave him a peep into the best parlor, where the claw-footed chairs, and dark mahogany tables, shone like mirrors; andirons, with their accompanying shovel and tongs, glistened from their covert of asparagus tops; mock-oranges and conch-shells decorated the mantelpiece; strings of various colored birds' eggs were suspended above it: a great ostrich egg was hung from the center of the room, and a corner cupboard, knowingly left open, displayed immense treasures of old silver and well-mended china.

From the moment Ichabod laid his eyes upon these regions of delight, the peace of his mind was at an end, and his only study was how to gain the affections of the peerless daughter of Van Tassel. In this enterprise, however, he had more real difficulties than generally fell to the lot of a knight-errant of yore, who seldom had any thing but giants, enchanters, fiery dragons, and such like easily conquered adversaries, to contend with; and had to make his way merely through gates of iron and brass, and walls of adamant, to the castle keep, where the lady of his heart was confined; all which he achieved as easily as a man would carve his way to the center of a Christmas pie; and then the lady gave him her hand as a matter of course. Ichabod, on the contrary, had to win his way to the heart of a country coquette, beset with a labyrinth of whims and caprices, which were for ever presenting new difficulties and impediments; and he had to encounter a host of fearful adversaries of real flesh and blood, the numerous rustic admirers, who beset every portal to her heart; keeping a watchful and angry eye upon each

other, but ready to fly out in the common cause against any new competitor.

Among these the most formidable was a burly, roaring, roystering blade, of the name of Abraham, or, according to the Dutch abbreviation, Brom Van Brunt, the hero of the country round, which rang with his feats of strength and hardihood. He was broad-shouldered and double-jointed, with short curly black hair, and a bluff, but not unpleasant countenance, having a mingled air of fun and arrogance. From his Herculean frame and great powers of limb, he received the nickname of Brom Bones, by which he was universally known. He was famed for great knowledge and skill in horsemanship, being as dexterous on horseback as a Tartar. He was foremost at all races and cock-fights; and, with the ascendancy which bodily strength acquires in rustic life, was the umpire in all disputes, setting his hat on one side, and giving his decisions with an air and tone admitting of no gainsay or appeal. He was always ready for either a fight or a frolic; but had more mischief than ill-will in his composition; and, with all his overbearing roughness, there was a strong dash of waggish good humor at bottom. He had three or four boon companions, who regarded him as their model, and at the head of whom he scoured the country, attending every scene of feud or merriment for miles round. In cold weather he was distinguished by a fur cap, surmounted with a flaunting fox's tail; and when the folks at a country gathering descried this well-known crest at a distance, whisking about among a squad of hard riders, they always stood by for a squall. Sometimes his crew would be heard dashing along past the farmhouses at midnight, with whoop and halloo, like a troop of Don Cossacks; and the old dames, startled out of their sleep, would listen for a moment till the hurry-scurry had clattered by, and then exclaim, "Ay, there goes Brom Bones and his gang!" The neighbors looked upon him with a mixture of awe, admiration, and good will; and when any madcap prank, or rustic brawl, occurred in the vicinity, always shook their heads, and warranted Brom Bones was at the bottom of it.

This rantipole hero had for some time singled out the blooming Katrina for the object of his uncouth gallantries, and though his amorous toyings were something like the gentle caresses and endearments of a bear, yet it was whispered that she did not altogether discourage his hopes. Certain it is, his advances were signals for rival candidates to retire, who felt no inclination to cross a lion in his amours; insomuch, that when his horse was seen tied to Van Tassel's paling, on a Sunday night, a sure sign that his master was courting, or, as it is termed, "sparking," within, all other suitors passed by in despair, and carried the war into other quarters.

Such was the formidable rival with whom Ichabod Crane had to contend, and, considering all things, a stouter man than he would have shrunk from the competition, and a wiser man would have despaired. He had, however, a happy mixture of pliability and perseverance in his nature; he was in form and spirit like a supple-jack—yielding, but tough; though he bent, he never broke; and though he bowed beneath the slightest pressure, yet, the moment it was away—jerk! he was as erect, and carried his head as high as ever.

To have taken the field openly against his rival would have been madness; for he was not a man to be thwarted in his amours, any more than that stormy lover, Achilles. Ichabod, therefore, made his advances in a quiet and gently insinuating manner. Under cover of his character of singing-master, he made frequent visits at the farmhouse; not that he had anything to apprehend

from the meddlesome interference of parents, which is so often a stumbling-block in the path of lovers. Balt Van Tassel was an easy indulgent soul; he loved his daughter better even than his pipe, and, like a reasonable man and an excellent father, let her have her way in everything. His notable little wife, too, had enough to do to attend to her housekeeping and manage her poultry; for, as she sagely observed, ducks and geese are foolish things, and must be looked after, but girls can take care of themselves. Thus while the busy dame bustled about the house, or plied her spinning-wheel at one end of the piazza, honest Balt would sit smoking his evening pipe at the other, watching the achievements of a little wooden warrior, who, armed with a sword in each hand, was most valiantly fighting the wind on the pinnacle of the barn. In the meantime, Ichabod would carry on his suit with the daughter by the side of the spring under the great elm, or sauntering along in the twilight, that hour so favorable to the lover's eloquence.

I PROFESS not to know how women's hearts are wooed and won. To me they have always been matters of riddle and admiration. Some seem to have but one vulnerable point, or door of access; while others have a thousand avenues, and may be captured in a thousand different ways. It is a great triumph of skill to gain the former, but a still greater proof of generalship to maintain possession of the latter, for the man must battle for his fortress at every door and window. He who wins a thousand common hearts is therefore entitled to some renown; but he who keeps undisputed sway over the heart of a coquette, is indeed a hero. Certain it is, this was not the case with the redoubtable Brom Bones; and from the moment Ichabod Crane made his advances, the interests of the former evidently declined; his horse was no longer seen tied at the palings on Sunday nights, and a deadly feud gradually arose between him and the preceptor of Sleepy Hollow.

Brom, who had a degree of rough chivalry in his nature, would fain have carried matters to open warfare, and have settled their pretensions to the lady, according to the mode of those most concise and simple reasoners, the knights-errant of yore—by single combat; but Ichabod was too conscious of the superior might of his adversary to enter the lists against him: he had overheard a boast of Bones, that he would "double the schoolmaster up, and lay him on a shelf of his own schoolhouse"; and he was too wary to give him an opportunity. There was something extremely provoking in this obstinately pacific system; it left Brom no alternative but to draw upon the funds of rustic waggery in his disposition, and to play off boorish practical jokes upon his rival. Ichabod became the object of whimsical persecution to Bones, and his gang of rough riders. They harried his hitherto peaceful domains; smoked out his singing-school, by stopping up the chimney; broke into the schoolhouse at night, in spite of its formidable fastenings of withe and window-stakes, and turned everything topsy-turvy: so that the poor schoolmaster began to think all the witches in the country held their meetings there. But what was still more annoying, Brom took all opportunities of turning him into ridicule in presence of his mistress, and had a scoundrel dog whom he taught to whine in the most ludicrous manner, and introduced as a rival of Ichabod's to instruct her in psalmody.

In this way matters went on for some time, without producing any material effect on the relative situation of the contending powers. On a fine autumnal afternoon, Ichabod, in pensive mood, sat enthroned on the lofty stool whence he usually watched all

the concerns of his little literary realm. In his hand he swayed a ferule, that scepter of despotic power; the birch of justice reposed on three nails, behind the throne, a constant terror to evil-doers; while on the desk before him might be seen sundry contraband articles and prohibited weapons, detected upon the persons of idle urchins; such as half-munched apples, popguns, whirligigs, fly-cages, and whole legions of rampant little paper game-cocks. Apparently there had been some appalling act of justice recently inflicted, for his scholars were all busily intent upon their books, or slyly whispering behind them with one eye kept upon the master; and a kind of buzzing stillness reigned throughout the schoolroom. It was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a negro, in tow-cloth jacket and trousers, a round-crowned fragment of a hat, like the cap of Mercury, and mounted on the back of a ragged, wild, half-broken colt, which he managed with a rope by way of halter. He came clattering up to the school door with an invitation to Ichabod to attend a merrymaking or "quilting frolic," to be held that evening at Mynheer Van Tassel's; and having delivered his message with that air of importance, and effort at fine language, which a negro is apt to display on petty embassies of the kind, he dashed over the brook, and was seen scampering away up the hollow, full of the importance and hurry of his mission.

All was now bustle and hubbub in the late quiet schoolroom. The scholars were hurried through their lessons, without stopping at trifles; those who were nimble skipped over half with impunity, and those who were tardy had a smart application now and then in the rear, to quicken their speed, or help them over a tall word. Books were flung aside without being put away on the shelves, inkstands were overturned, benches thrown down, and the whole school was turned loose an hour before the usual time, bursting forth like a legion of young imps, yelping and racketing about the green, in joy at their early emancipation.

The gallant Ichabod now spent at least an extra half-hour at his toilet, brushing and furbishing up his best, and indeed only suit of rusty black, and arranging his looks by a bit of broken looking-glass, that hung up in the schoolhouse. That he might make his appearance before his mistress in the true style of a cavalier, he borrowed a horse from the farmer with whom he was domiciliated, a choleric old Dutchman, of the name of Hans Van Ripper, and, thus gallantly mounted, issued forth, like a knight-errant in quest of adventures. But it is meet I should, in the true spirit of romantic story, give some account of the looks and equipments of my hero and his steed. The animal he bestrode was a broken-down plowhorse, that had outlived almost everything but his viciousness. He was gaunt and shagged, with a ewe neck and a head like a hammer; his rusty mane and tail were tangled and knotted with burrs; one eye had lost its pupil, and was glaring and spectral; but the other had the gleam of a genuine devil in it. Still he must have had fire and mettle in his day, if we may judge from the name he bore of Gunpowder. He had, in fact, been a favorite steed of his master's, the choleric Van Ripper, who was a furious rider, and had infused, very probably, some of his own spirit into the animal; for, old and broken-down as he looked, there was more of the lurking devil in him than in any young filly in the country.

Ichabod was a suitable figure for such a steed. He rode with short stirrups, which brought his knees nearly up to the pommel of the saddle; his sharp elbows stuck out like grasshoppers'; he carried his whip perpendicularly in his hand, like a scepter, and, as his horse jogged on,

the motion of his arms was not unlike the flapping of a pair of wings. A small wool hat rested on the top of his nose, for so his scanty strip of forehead might be called; and the skirts of his black coat fluttered out almost to the horse's tail. Such was the appearance of Ichabod and his steed, as they shambled out of the gate of Hans Van Ripper, and it was altogether such an apparition as is seldom to be met with in broad daylight.

It was, as I have said, a fine autumnal day, the sky was clear and serene, and nature wore that rich and golden livery which we always associate with the idea of abundance. The forests had put on their sober brown and yellow, while some trees of the tenderer kind had been nipped by the frosts into brilliant dyes of orange, purple, and scarlet. Streaming files of wild ducks began to make their appearance high in the air; the bark of the squirrel might be heard from the groves of beech and hickory nuts, and the pensive whistle of the quail at intervals from the neighboring stubble-field.

The small birds were taking their farewell banquets. In the fulness of their revelry, they fluttered, chirping and frolicking, from bush to bush, and tree to tree, capricious from the very profusion and variety around them. There was the honest cock-robin, the favorite game of stripling sportsmen, with its loud querulous note; and the twittering blackbirds flying in sable clouds; and the golden-winged woodpecker, with his crimson crest, his broad black gorget, and splendid plumage; and the cedar bird, with its red-tipt wings and yellow-tipt tail, and its little monteiro cap of feathers; and the blue-jay, that noisy coxcomb, in his gay light-blue coat and white underclothes; screaming and chattering, nodding and bobbing and bowing, and pretending to be on good terms with every songster of the grove.

As Ichabod jogged slowly on his way, his eye, ever open to every symptom of culinary abundance, ranged with delight over the treasures of jolly autumn. On all sides he beheld vast store of apples; some hanging in oppressive opulence on the trees; some gathered into baskets and barrels for the market; others heaped up in rich piles for the cider-press. Farther on he beheld great fields of Indian corn, with its golden ears peeping from their leafy coverts, and holding out the promise of cakes and hasty pudding; and the yellow pumpkins lying beneath them, turning up their fair round bellies to the sun, and giving ample prospects of the most luxurious of pies; and anon he passed the fragrant buckwheat fields, breathing the odor of the beehive, and as he beheld them, soft anticipations stole over his mind of dainty flapjacks, well buttered, and garnished with honey or treacle, by the delicate little dimpled hand of Katrina Van Tassel.

Thus feeding his mind with many sweet thoughts and "sugared suppositions," he journeyed along the sides of a range of hills which look out upon some of the goodliest scenes of the mighty Hudson. The sun gradually wheeled his broad disk down into the west. The wide bosom of the Tappan Zee lay motionless and glassy, excepting that here and there a gentle undulation waved and prolonged the blue shadow of the distant mountain. A few amber clouds floated in the sky, without a breath of air to move them. The horizon was of a fine golden tint, changing gradually into a pure apple green, and from that into the deep blue of the mid-heaven. A slanting ray lingered on the woody crests of the precipices that overhung some parts of the river, giving greater depth to the dark-gray and purple of their rocky sides. A sloop was loitering in the distance, dropping slowly down with the tide, her sail hanging uselessly against the mast; and as the reflection of the sky gleamed along the still water, it

seemed as if the vessel was suspended in the air.

It was toward evening that Ichabod arrived at the castle of the Heer Van Tassel, which he found thronged with the pride and flower of the adjacent country. Old farmers, a spare leathern-faced race, in homespun coats and breeches, blue stockings, huge shoes, and magnificent pewter buckles. Their brisk withered little dames, in close crimped caps, long-waisted short-gowns, homespun petticoats, with scissors and pincushions, and gay calico pockets hanging on the outside. Buxom lasses, almost as antiquated as their mothers, excepting where a straw hat, a fine ribbon, or perhaps a white frock, gave symptoms of city innovation. The sons, in short square-skirted coats with rows of stupendous brass buttons, and their hair generally queued in the fashion of the times, especially if they could procure an eel-skin for the purpose, it being esteemed, throughout the country, as a potent nourisher and strengthener of the hair.

Brom Bones, however, was the hero of the scene, having come to the gathering on his favorite steed Daredevil, a creature, like himself, full of mettle and mischief, and which no one but himself could manage. He was, in fact, noted for preferring vicious animals, given to all kinds of tricks, which kept the rider in constant risk of his neck, for he held a tractable well-broken horse as unworthy of a lad of spirit.

Fain would I pause to dwell upon the world of charms that burst upon the enraptured gaze of my hero, as he entered the state parlor of Van Tassel's mansion. Not those of the bevy of buxom lasses, with their luxurious display of red and white; but the ample charms of a genuine Dutch country tea-table, in the sumptuous time of autumn. Such heaped-up platters of cakes of various and almost indescribable kinds, known only to experienced Dutch housewives! There was the doughty doughnut, the tenderer olykoek, and the crisp and crumbling cruller; sweet cakes and short cakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes, and the whole family of cakes. And then there were apple pies and peach pies and pumpkin pies; besides slices of ham and smoked beef; and moreover delectable dishes of preserved plums, and peaches, and pears, and quinces; not to mention broiled shad and roasted chickens; together with bowls of milk and cream, all mingled higgledy-piggledy, pretty much as I have enumerated them, with the motherly teapot sending up its clouds of vapor from the midst—heaven bless the mark! I want breath and time to discuss this banquet as it deserves, and am too eager to get on with my story. Happily, Ichabod Crane was not in so great a hurry as his historian, but did ample justice to every dainty.

He was a kind and thankful creature, whose heart dilated in proportion as his skin was filled with good cheer; and whose spirits rose with eating as some men's do with drink. He could not help, too, rolling his large eyes round him as he ate, and chuckling with the possibility that he might one day be lord of all this scene of almost unimaginable luxury and splendor. Then, he thought, how soon he'd turn his back upon the old schoolhouse; snap his fingers in the face of Hans Van Ripper, and every other niggardly patron, and kick any itinerant pedagogue out of doors that should dare to call him comrade!

Old Baltus Van Tassel moved about among his guests with a face dilated with content and good humor, round and jolly as the harvest moon. His hospitable attentions were brief, but expressive, being confined to a shake of the hand, a slap on the shoulder, a loud laugh, and a pressing invitation to "fall to, and help themselves."

And now the sound of the music from the common room, or hall, sum-

moned to the dance. The musician was an old gray-headed negro, who had been the itinerant orchestra of the neighborhood for more than half a century. His instrument was as old and battered as himself. The greater part of the time he scraped on two or three strings, accompanying every movement of the bow with a motion of the head; bowing almost to the ground, and stamping with his foot whenever a fresh couple were to start.

Ichabod prided himself upon his dancing as much as upon his vocal powers. Not a limb, not a fiber about him was idle; and to have seen his loosely hung frame in full motion, and clattering about the room, you would have thought Saint Vitus himself, that blessed patron of the dance, was figuring before you in person. He was the admiration of all the negroes; who, having gathered, of all ages and sizes, from the farm and the neighborhood, stood forming a pyramid of shining black faces at every door and window, gazing with delight at the scene, rolling their white eyeballs, and showing grinning rows of ivory from ear to ear. How could the flogger of urchins be otherwise than animated and joyous? the lady of his heart was his partner in the dance, and smiling graciously in reply to all his amorous oglings; while Brom Bones, sorely smitten with love and jealousy, sat brooding by himself in one corner.

When the dance was at an end, Ichabod was attracted to a knot of the sager folks, who, with old Van Tassel, sat smoking at one end of the piazza, gossiping over former times, and drawing out long stories about the war.

This neighborhood, at the time of which I am speaking, was one of those highly favored places which abound with chronicle and great men. The British and American line had run near it during the war; it had, therefore, been the scene of marauding, and infested with refugees, cowboys, and all kinds of border chivalry. Just sufficient time had elapsed to enable each story-teller to dress up his tale with a little becoming fiction, and, in the indistinctness of his recollection, to make himself the hero of every exploit.

There was the story of Doffue Martling, a large blue-bearded Dutchman, who had nearly taken a British frigate with an old iron nine-pounder from a mud breastwork, only that his gun burst at the sixth discharge. And there was an old gentleman who shall be nameless, being too rich a mynheer to be lightly mentioned, who, in the battle of White Plains, being an excellent master of defense, parried a musket ball with a small sword, insomuch that he absolutely felt it whiz round the blade, and glance off at the hilt: in proof of which, he was ready at any time to show the sword, with the hilt a little bent. There were several more that had been equally great in the field, not one of whom but was persuaded that he had a considerable hand in bringing the war to a happy termination.

But all these were nothing to the tales of ghosts and apparitions that succeeded. The neighborhood is rich in legendary treasures of the kind. Local tales and superstitions thrive best in these sheltered long-settled retreats; but are trampled under foot by the shifting throng that forms the population of most of our country places. Besides, there is no encouragement for ghosts in most of our villages, for they have scarcely had time to finish their first nap, and turn themselves in their graves, before their surviving friends have traveled away from the neighborhood; so that when they turn out at night to walk their rounds, they have no acquaintance left to call upon. This is perhaps the reason why we so seldom hear of ghosts except in our long-established Dutch communities.

The immediate cause, however, of the prevalence of supernatural stories

in these parts, was doubtless owing to the vicinity of Sleepy Hollow. There was a contagion in the very air that blew from that haunted region; it breathed forth an atmosphere of dreams and fancies infecting all the land. Several of the Sleepy Hollow people were present at Van Tassel's, and, as usual, were doling out their wild and wonderful legends. Many dismal tales were told about funeral trains, and mourning cries and wailings heard and seen about the great tree where the unfortunate Major André was taken, and which stood in the neighborhood. Some mention was made also of the woman in white, that haunted the dark glen at Raven Rock, and was often heard to shriek on winter nights before a storm, having perished there in the snow. The chief part of the stories, however, turned upon the favorite specter of Sleepy Hollow, the headless horseman, who had been heard several times of late, patrolling the country; and, it was said, tethered his horse nightly among the graves in the churchyard.

The sequestered situation of this church seems always to have made it a favorite haunt of troubled spirits. It stands on a knoll, surrounded by locust-trees and lofty elms, from among which its decent whitewashed walls shine modestly forth, like Christian purity beaming through the shades of retirement. A gentle slope descends from it to a silver sheet of water, bordered by high trees, between which, peeps may be caught at the blue hills of the Hudson. To look upon its grass-grown yard, where the sunbeams seem to sleep so quietly, one would think that there at least the dead might rest in peace. On one side of the church extends a wide woody dell, along which raves a large brook among broken rocks and trunks of fallen trees. Over a deep black part of the stream, not far from the church, was formerly thrown a wooden bridge; the road that led to it, and the bridge itself, were thickly shaded by overhanging trees, which cast a gloom about it, even in the daytime; but occasioned a fearful darkness at night. This was one of the favorite haunts of the headless horseman; and the place where he was most frequently encountered. The tale was told of old Brouwer, a most heretical disbeliever in ghosts, how he met the horseman returning from his foray into Sleepy Hollow, and was obliged to get up behind him; how they galloped over bush and brake, over hill and swamp, until they reached the bridge; when the horseman suddenly turned into a skeleton, threw old Brouwer into the brook, and sprang away over the tree-tops with a clap of thunder.

This story was immediately matched by a thrice marvelous adventure of Brom Bones, who made light of the galloping Hessian as an arrant jockey. He affirmed that, on returning one night from the neighboring village of Sing Sing, he had been overtaken by this midnight trooper; that he had offered to race with him for a bowl of punch, and should have won it too, for Daredevil beat the goblin horse all hollow, but, just as they came to the church bridge, the Hessian bolted, and vanished in a flash of fire.

All these tales, told in that drowsy undertone with which men talk in the dark, the countenances of the listeners only now and then receiving a casual gleam from the glare of a pipe, sank deep in the mind of Ichabod. He repaid them in kind with large extracts from his invaluable author, Cotton Mather, and added many marvelous events that had taken place in his native state of Connecticut, and fearful sights which he had seen in his nightly walks about Sleepy Hollow.

The revel now gradually broke up. The old farmers gathered together their families in their wagons, and were heard for some time rattling along the hollow roads, and over the

distant hills. Some of the damsels mounted on pillions behind their favorite swains, and their light-hearted laughter, mingling with the clatter of hoofs, echoed along the silent woodlands, sounding fainter and fainter until they gradually died away—and the late scene of noise and frolic was all silent and deserted. Ichabod only lingered behind, according to the custom of country lovers, to have a tête-à-tête with the heiress, fully convinced that he was now on the high road to success. What passed at this interview I will not pretend to say, for in fact I do not know. Something, however, I fear me, must have gone wrong, for he certainly sallied forth, after no very great interval, with an air quite desolate and chopfallen.—Oh these women! these women! Could that girl have been playing off any of her coquettish tricks?—Was her encouragement of the poor pedagogue all a mere sham to secure her conquest of his rival?—Heaven only knows, not I!—Let it suffice to say, Ichabod stole forth with the air of one who had been sacking a hen-roost, rather than a fair lady's heart. Without looking to the right or left to notice the scene of rural wealth, on which he had so often gloated, he went straight to the stable, and with several hearty cuffs and kicks, roused his steed most uncourteously from the comfortable quarters in which he was soundly sleeping, dreaming of mountains of corn and oats, and whole valleys of timothy and clover.

It was the very witching time of night that Ichabod, heavy-hearted and crestfallen, pursued his travel homewards, along the sides of the lofty hills which rise above Tarry Town, and which he had traversed so cheerily in the afternoon. The hour was as dismal as himself. Far below him, the Tappan Zee spread its dusky and indistinct waste of waters, with here and there the tall mast of a sloop, riding quietly at anchor under the land. In the dead hush of midnight, he could even hear the barking of the watch-dog from the opposite shore of the Hudson; but it was so vague and faint as only to give an idea of his distance from this faithful companion of man. Now and then, too, the long-drawn crowing of a cock, accidentally awakened, would sound far, far off, from some farmhouse away among the hills—but it was like a dreaming sound in his ear. No signs of life occurred near him, but occasionally the melancholy chirp of a cricket, or perhaps the guttural twang of a bull-frog, from a neighboring marsh, as if sleeping uncomfortably, and turning suddenly in his bed.

All the stories of ghosts and goblins that he had heard in the afternoon, now came crowding upon his recollection. The night grew darker and darker; the stars seemed to sink deeper in the sky, and driving clouds occasionally hid them from his sight. He had never felt so lonely and dismal. He was, moreover, approaching the very place where many of the scenes of the ghost stories had been laid. In the center of the road stood an enormous tulip-tree, which towered like a giant above all the other trees of the neighborhood, and formed a kind of landmark. Its limbs were gnarled, and fantastic, large enough to form trunks for ordinary trees, twisting down almost to the earth, and rising again into the air. It was connected with the tragical story of the unfortunate André, who had been taken prisoner hard by; and was universally known by the name of Major André's tree. The common people regarded it with a mixture of respect and superstition, partly out of sympathy for the fate of its ill-starred namesake, and partly from the tales of strange sights and doleful lamentations told concerning it.

As Ichabod approached this fearful tree, he began to whistle: he thought his whistle was answered—it was but a blast sweeping sharply through the dry branches. As he approached a

little nearer, he thought he saw something white, hanging in the midst of the tree—he paused and ceased whistling; but on looking more narrowly, perceived that it was a place where the tree had been scathed by lightning, and the white wood laid bare. Suddenly he heard a groan—his teeth chattered and his knees smote against the saddle: it was but the rubbing of one huge bough upon another, as they were swayed about by the breeze. He passed the tree in safety, but new perils lay before him.

About two hundred yards from the tree a small brook crossed the road, and ran into a marshy and thickly wooded glen, known by the name of Wiley's swamp. A few rough logs, laid side by side, served for a bridge over this stream. On that side of the road where the brook entered the wood, a group of oaks and chestnuts, matted thick with wild grapevines, threw a cavernous gloom over it. To pass this bridge was the severest trial. It was at this identical spot that the unfortunate André was captured, and under the covert of those chestnuts and vines were the sturdy yeomen concealed who surprized him. This has ever since been considered a haunted stream, and fearful are the feelings of the schoolboy who has to pass it alone after dark.

As he approached the stream his heart began to thump; he summoned up, however, all his resolution, gave his horse half a score of kicks in the ribs, and attempted to dash briskly across the bridge; but instead of starting forward, the perverse old animal made a lateral movement, and ran broadside against the fence. Ichabod, whose fears increased with the delay, jerked the reins on the other side, and kicked lustily with the contrary foot: it was all in vain; his steed started, it is true, but it was only to plunge to the opposite side of the road into a thicket of brambles and alder bushes. The schoolmaster now bestowed both whip and heel upon the starveling ribs of old Gunpowder, who dashed forward, snuffling and snorting, but came to a stand just by the bridge, with a suddenness that had nearly sent his rider sprawling over his head. Just at this moment a plashy tramp by the side of the bridge caught the sensitive ear of Ichabod. In the dark shadow of the grove, on the margin of the brook, he beheld something huge, misshapen, black and towering. It stirred not, but seemed gathered up in the gloom, like some gigantic monster ready to spring upon the traveler.

The hair of the affrighted pedagogue rose upon his head with terror. What was to be done? To turn and fly was now too late; and besides, what chance was there of escaping ghost or goblin, if such it was, which could ride upon the wings of the wind? Summoning up, therefore, a show of courage, he demanded in stammering accents—"Who are you?" He received no reply. He repeated his demand in a still more agitated voice. Still there was no answer. Once more he cudgeled the sides of the inflexible Gunpowder, and shutting his eyes, broke forth with involuntary fervor into a psalm tune. Just then the shadowy object of alarm put itself in motion, and, with a scramble and a bound, stood at once in the middle of the road. Though the night was dark and dismal, yet the form of the unknown might now in some degree be ascertained. He appeared to be a horseman of large dimensions, and mounted on a black horse of powerful frame. He made no offer of molestation or sociability, but kept aloof on one side of the road, jogging along on the blind side of old Gunpowder, who had now got over his fright and waywardness.

Ichabod, who had no relish for this strange midnight companion, and bethought himself of the adventure of Brom Bones with the Galloping Hessian, now quickened his steed, in hopes of leaving him behind. The

stranger, however, quickened his horse to an equal pace. Ichabod pulled up, and fell into a walk, thinking to lag behind—the other did the same. His heart began to sink within him; he endeavored to resume his psalm tune, but his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he could not utter a stave. There was something in the moody and dogged silence of this pertinacious companion, that was mysterious and appalling. It was soon fearfully accounted for. On mounting a rising ground, which brought the figure of his fellow-traveler in relief against the sky, gigantic in height, and muffled in a cloak, Ichabod was horror-struck, on perceiving that he was headless!—but his horror was still more increased, on observing that the head, which should have rested on his shoulders, was carried before him on the pommel of the saddle: his terror rose to desperation; he rained a shower of kicks and blows upon Gunpowder, hoping, by a sudden movement, to give his companion the slip—but the specter started full jump with him. Away then they dashed, through thick and thin; stones flying, and sparks flashing at every bound. Ichabod's flimsy garments fluttered in the air, as he stretched his long lank body away over his horse's head, in the eagerness of his flight.

They had now reached the road which turns off to Sleepy Hollow; but Gunpowder, who seemed possessed with a demon, instead of keeping up it, made an opposite turn, and plunged headlong down hill to the left. This road leads through a sandy hollow, shaded by trees for about a quarter of a mile, where it crosses the bridge famous in goblin story, and just beyond swells the green knoll on which stands the whitewashed church.

As yet the panic of the steed had given his unskilful rider an apparent advantage in the chase; but just as he had got half-way through the hollow, the girths of the saddle gave way, and he felt it slipping from under him. He seized it by the pommel, and endeavored to hold it firm, but in vain; and had just time to save himself by clasping old Gunpowder round the neck, when the saddle fell to the earth, and he heard it trampled under foot by his pursuer. For a moment the terror of Hans Van Ripper's wrath passed across his mind—for it was his Sunday saddle; but this was no time for petty fears; the goblin was hard on his haunches; and (unskilful rider that he was!) he had much ado to maintain his seat; sometimes slipping on one side, sometimes on another, and sometimes jolted on the high ridge of his horse's backbone, with a violence that he verily feared would cleave him asunder.

An opening in the trees now cheered him with the hopes that the church bridge was at hand. The wavering reflection of a silver star in the bosom of the brook told him that he was not mistaken. He saw the walls of the church dimly glaring under the trees beyond. He recollected the place where Brom Bones's ghostly competitor had disappeared. "If I can but reach that bridge," thought Ichabod, "I am safe." Just then he heard the black steed panting and blowing close behind him; he even fancied that he felt his hot breath. Another convulsive kick in the ribs, and old Gunpowder sprang upon the bridge; he thundered over the resounding planks; he gained the opposite side; and now Ichabod cast a look behind to see if his pursuer should vanish, according to rule, in a flash of fire and brimstone. Just then he saw the goblin rising in his stirrups, and in the very act of hurling his head at him. Ichabod endeavored to dodge the horrible missile, but too late. It encountered his cranium with a tremendous crash—he was tumbled headlong into the dust, and Gunpowder, the black steed, and the goblin rider, passed by like a whirlwind.

The next morning the old horse was found without his saddle, and with the bridle under his feet, soberly cropping the grass at his master's gate. Ichabod did not make his appearance at breakfast—dinner-hour came, but no Ichabod. The boys assembled at the schoolhouse, and strolled idly about the banks of the brook; but no schoolmaster. Hans Van Ripper now began to feel some uneasiness about the fate of poor Ichabod, and his saddle. An inquiry was set on foot, and after diligent investigation they came upon his traces. In one part of the road leading to the church was found the saddle trampled in the dirt; the tracks of horses' hoofs deeply dented in the road, and evidently at furious speed, were traced to the bridge, beyond which, on the bank of a broad part of the brook, where the water ran deep and black, was found the hat of the unfortunate Ichabod, and close beside it a shattered pumpkin.

The brook was searched, but the body of the schoolmaster was not to be discovered. Hans Van Ripper, as executor of his estate, examined the bundle which contained all his worldly effects. They consisted of two shirts and a half; two stocks for the neck; a pair or two of worsted stockings; an old pair of corduroy smallclothes; a rusty razor; a book of psalm tunes, full of dogs' ears; and a broken pitchpipe. As to the books and furniture of the schoolhouse, they belonged to the community, excepting Cotton Mather's *History of Witchcraft*, a New England Almanac, and a book of dreams and fortune-telling; in which last was a sheet of foolscap much scribbled and blotted in several fruitless attempts to make a copy of verses in honor of the heiress of Van Tassel. These magic books and the poetic scrawl were forthwith consigned to the flames by Hans Van Ripper; who from that time forward determined to send his children no more to school; observing, that he never knew any good come of this same reading and writing. Whatever money the schoolmaster possessed, and he had received his quarter's pay but a day or two before, he must have had about his person at the time of his disappearance.

The mysterious event caused much speculation at the church on the following Sunday. Knots of gazers and gossips were collected in the churchyard, at the bridge, and at the spot where the hat and pumpkin had been found. The stories of Brouwer, of Bones, and a whole budget of others, were called to mind; and when they had diligently considered them all, and compared them with the symptoms of the present case, they shook their heads, and came to the conclusion that Ichabod had been carried off by the galloping Hessian. As he was a bachelor, and in nobody's debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him. The school was removed to a different quarter of the hollow, and another pedagogue reigned in his stead.

It is true, an old farmer, who had been down to New York on a visit several years after, and from whom this account of the ghostly adventure was received, brought home the intelligence that Ichabod Crane was still alive; that he had left the neighborhood, partly through fear of the goblin and Hans Van Ripper, and partly in mortification at having been suddenly dismissed by the heiress; that he had changed his quarters to a distant part of the country; had kept school and studied law at the same time, had been admitted to the bar, turned politician, electioneered, written for the newspapers, and finally had been made a justice of the Ten Pound Court. Brom Bones, too, who shortly after his rival's disappearance conducted the blooming Katrina in triumph to the altar, was observed to look exceedingly knowing whenever the story of Ichabod was related, and

always burst into a hearty laugh at the mention of the pumpkin; which led some to suspect that he knew more about the matter than he chose to tell.

The old country wives, however, who are the best judges of these matters, maintain to this day that Ichabod was spirited away by supernatural means; and it is a favorite story often told about the neighborhood round the winter evening fire. The bridge became more than ever an object of superstitious awe, and that may be the reason why the road has been altered of late years, so as to approach the church by the border of the mill-pond. The schoolhouse being deserted, soon fell to decay, and was reported to be haunted by the ghost of the unfortunate pedagogue; and the plowboy, loitering homeward of a still summer evening, has often fancied his voice at a distance, chanting a melancholy psalm tune among the tranquil solitudes of Sleepy Hollow.

HAUNTED

By EARL W. SCOTT

The auld house glooms atop the wall,
  With never a tenant there;
'Twas erected before Prince Charlie's fall,
  At the edge of the moorland bare.

At nicht the dreenin' wind blows o'er
  Its turrets, stark and drear,
And the misted fingers of the storm
  Alone seek entrance here.

A werewolf stalks its empty halls;
  It killed its bonnie Laird;
Fu' many a year ago it was
  That it murdered Malcom Baird.

At nicht strange lights abune the brae
  Dance warning to all men
To seek their hearths and stay away
  Frae the hoose o'er the lonely glen.

The bangin' shutters, through the wail
  Of the dreenin' gale, shriek laughter;
'Tis said that in its last travail
  The Laird's soul sought a rafter

And perches there o'er the attic stair,
  To moan and mouth a warning
To all folk who might enter there
  From dusk to light o' the morning.

The Eyrie

(Continued from page 580)

ing A. Merritt's fine story, *The Woman of the Wood.* It is your pseudo-scientific tales that I like most. Edmond Hamilton easily leads here, with Ray Cummings a close second. I agree with most of your readers in that those stories dealing with unearthly forces (as we know them, of course) are best. Yet Seabury Quinn is one of my favorites. Lovecraft is great, and Long's tale, *The Space-Eaters,* places him, too, high in my list of favorites. I make a plea for a quarterly of reprints from your regular issues, or at least some move in that direction. My mouth has watered at the titles of some of your stories from old issues before I was a reader of your magazine—tales which were so good that they are still recalled and praised by some of your readers who write in to The Eyrie. What thoughts a title like *The Wind That Tramps the World* brings up, or *The People of the Comet!* A title like that first *must* spontaneously be real, enduring literature—and it is buried in the past! I shall never be satisfied until some author of WEIRD TALES discovers a way to carry complete files of my favorite magazine into the hereafter. I would gladly sizzle on a gridiron to read Hamilton or Merritt."

As to reprinting favorite stories from old issues: We have never reprinted any of our own stories, for we have felt that it would be unfair to print in WEIRD TALES any story that thousands of our readers must have read in this magazine in a former issue. But lately we have received many requests that we reprint some of the cream of our previous stories—and these requests come from readers who have already read the stories they ask us to reprint. Three stories are particularly requested, from issues of 1924 and 1925: *The Wind That Tramps the World,* by Frank Owen; *The Stranger From Kurdistan,* by E. Hoffmann Price; and *The Phantom Farmhouse,* by Seabury Quinn. How about it, readers—do you want us to use, as our monthly reprint story, an occasional fine tale taken from old issues of this magazine, or shall we continue our present policy of choosing our monthly "Weird Story Reprint" entirely from among famous weird stories that have never before appeared in WEIRD TALES? Unless we receive an overwhelming number of requests for the reprint of old favorites from WEIRD TALES, we shall not reprint any of them until at least ten years after their first publication in this magazine—and WEIRD TALES is not yet six years old. But the decision is up to you. If you really want them, and want them enough to let us know your wishes in no uncertain terms, then we will give you, every few months, one of your old favorites from this magazine as our monthly "Weird Story Reprint"; but we shall not change our policy in this regard unless you really want us to do so. WEIRD TALES is your magazine, and we shall be guided entirely by what you, the readers, wish us to do.

(Continued on page 714)

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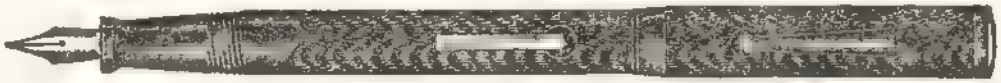

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(Continued from page 712)

Doris Wilson, of Great Falls, Montana, writes to The Eyrie: "I have just finished Edmond Hamilton's story, *Crashing Suns,* in the September issue, and still feel thrilled. I have read your magazine every month for three years and certainly have enjoyed it. Let us have *The Wind That Tramps the World* for a reprint, as Mr. Scotten suggests in your September Eyrie; I am dying to read it."

"As one of the readers of your magazine," writes Arthur Downing, of Garrison, New York, "allow me to congratulate both you and the author on the very beautiful poem, *The Gates of Nineveh,* by Robert E. Howard, in your July issue. I am sending a copy of it to my mother and sister, now in England. The sudden disappearance of the ancient Mesopotamian civilizations is one of the mysteries of history. Possibly it was due to their particularly inhuman methods of warfare. Tell the author, please, how much I enjoyed *The Gates of Nineveh.*"

"*Crashing Suns!* Boy!! what a story!!!" writes Edwin Beard, of St. Louis. "Such a theme! Etheric propulsion! Pardon the exclamations, but I'm uncontrollably wild about *Crashing Suns.*"

Many readers are desirous of obtaining back numbers of this magazine containing stories that they have missed. A letter to the circulation department will bring a prompt reply as to what issues can still be supplied, and at what price.

Readers, what is your favorite story in this issue? The most popular story in the September WEIRD TALES, as shown by your votes, was the concluding installment of Edmond Hamilton's interplanetary serial, *Crashing Suns;* your second choice was *The Oath of Hul Jok,* by Nictzin Dyalhis.

MY FAVORITE STORIES IN THE NOVEMBER WEIRD TALES ARE:

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Reader's name and address:

The Mystery in Acatlan

(Continued from page 588)

marry us, and then you will belong to me for ever and for ever.'

"'Tomorrow,' she repeated. 'I will be ready.'

"We stayed out in the moonlight, sitting by the doorway under the jasmine vine until midnight, lovers for the first time. Then I got up and told her she must sleep.

"'We must start very early in the morning,' I said. 'It is a long ride.'

"I went to bed and heard her moving about the house until at last I fell asleep, happier than I had ever been or ever shall be in my life.

"In the morning when I got up there was no sign of Chulita, no one at all in the house but the little brown dog, asleep on the rug with a faded jasmine flower under her paw.

"Failing to find Chulita anywhere, I went to the office and spent the day half-heartedly working, puzzled and unhappy. Why had she failed me? Had anything happened to her? Had perhaps that Mexican returned? Again the eery thought crossed the edges of my mind, sending faint cold through all my veins —the thought of the strange impossible legend which one finds in every nation and told in every tongue, the legend of the *loup-garou,* the werewolf; that ridiculous tale believed by the Indians of a being under a curse and doomed to be human by day, or by night, and a dog or wolf for the other twelve hours.

"I looked down at the little dog I had rescued that day at Cuernavaca, the day of the same evening that Chulita had appeared in my house. The dog's deep brown eyes were fixed upon me with a look of sadness and utter devotion and its

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mouth was drawn up at one corner by the scar into a sort of a half smile —so like Chulita's, so terribly like! I shuddered, and even in the hot sunlight pouring through the window my hands felt cold and wet. The dog sighed profoundly and came over and laid her head heavily upon my feet.

"When I returned I found Chulita dressed for travel in one of the prettiest of the dresses I had had sent out to her from Mexico City, some weeks before. She was so pretty and and so sweet and eager that fears and cautions slid off my back like water from a duck's wing. We mounted and rode through the fragrant, moonlit night, down past mist-hung ravines where the perfumes of a thousand orchids enveloped us, down and downward and at last into moonlit, sleeping Cuernavaca.

"I roused the priest, and we were married in the dark little church. The priest's sister and a sleepy Mexican lad were witnesses. The civil ceremony would be attended to later. We went out of the church to where our horses stood, and just as we came around the stone buttress we ran into a Mexican. Heaven alone knows how he came there, by what evil chance he was abroad and passing at that hour and place. But there he was. In the clear moonlight I recognized instantly his great bulk, his evil eyes and drooping mustache. He snapped out a single word.

Chulita turned and saw him and screamed. A knife flashed from his hand and I sprang at him.

"It was a long and bitter fight, for this time he had not been drinking and he had his full strength. I had him at last, and felt his body suddenly grow limp as his breath left him beneath my fingers. But he had me, too. The blood was pouring from a gash in my head and the world spun and went out as I collapsed.

"The stars were paling when I came to myself, still lying across the body of the Mexican in the completely deserted street. Evidently no one had seen us or been near. The horses were still tied to the hitching-post. I staggered to my feet and looked about for Chulita. She was gone! There was no one there, nothing but the little brown dog lying dead in the moonlight with a Mexican knife through her heart. I never could find Chulita again, nor anyone who had seen her or any trace of her. There is no explanation, is there, Doctor? You've been out in lonely places, in Mexico; is there?"

Dr. McGonigal came out of his revery.

"Er—no, Mr. Larrison, I canna say there is," he answered.

"Except of course unless," continued Larrison, "unless—however, that way madness lies."

He rose, and soon, the storm having died down in the meantime, he left the club for his rooms.

The rest of us said nothing for awhile.

Bob Wheeler spoke suddenly.

"Er, ah," he began, "didn't I hear somewhere that Larrison uses some form of dope?"

The doctor grunted.

I admitted that I had heard the same rumor.

"Ay! Perhaps!" said the doctor, pulling on his greatcoat. "God-forsaken place, Acatlan. Gets a man, one way or another."

"That would explain a story like that," Wheeler went on.

Again the doctor grunted.

"Still," he said in his slow Scotch way as he pulled on his gloves, "I'm wondering, lads, which came first, the dope or the dog? Good-night, fellows."

The door closed after him.

The Polar Doom

(Continued from page 607)

David, though, wasted no glance upon them, pushing rapidly on, until both men were sweating profusely in the tropical warmth. It was with an effort that Warren remembered himself to be within a few hundred miles of the supreme icy desolation of the pole itself.

The great light-shaft ahead was growing in apparent size as they forged on toward it, and McQuirk had begun to move more carefully, more quietly. Suddenly he flung himself prostrate on the ground, pulling Warren down beside him. In a moment there passed over them a buzzing, dwindling whine, and then they saw, silhouetted against the white brilliance ahead, a dozen or more dark shapes that were dropping smoothly down toward the mound from which the light sprang.

"The first raiders!" McQuirk was whispering. "They've come back; God knows where they've been!"

The two lay motionless for a moment, then crept stealthily on. Through the unending lanes of gleaming domes they threaded their way, forging on and on, until at last they were within a few thousand feet of the dark, low mound of the light, and could catch a few drifting fragments of whispering, clicking speech from the mound itself, and once a snatch of human-voiced imitation of the former, at which Warren felt his arm convulsively gripped by the other. And now they had slowed their progress to a crawl, and were creeping onward with infinite stealth and patience, hiding as much as possible from the revealing light from ahead behind the domes and their shadows, crawling from shadow to shadow and drawing ever nearer toward the sides of the low, broad mound.

At last they had reached the end of the forest of domes which encircled

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that mound and crouched in the shadow of one at the very edge, but a few yards from its sloping side. Crouching there they heard the sounds from its summit clearly, now, and saw beneath the mighty brilliance above scores of the dark, hideous shapes of the toad-men, clustered on the summit, moving to and fro. McQuirk had paused, now, and his eyes held Warren's.

"It's death for us if we show ourselves on that summit," he said, in a whisper, "but up there is our last chance."

Warren gazed up toward the mound's thronged top, and something seemed to tighten across his chest. Then, without speaking, his hand went forth to the other, who gripped it once, then crawled slowly out of the protecting shadow, across the narrow, illuminated belt that separated them from the mound's sloping side. And Warren followed.

Once again they paused, glancing up toward the summit; then crawled on, up its side toward the mound's top, up, up, toward death, until they were within a few yards of that top, a few feet, a few——

Boom!

A tremendous, powerful note, deep and low and muffled strangely, it sounded from the air around them, from over all the island, it seemed, thundering out with cosmic, deliberate grandeur.

McQuirk gripped the airman's arm. "The domes!" he whispered. "They're opening; they're——"

Boom!

Again the vast, deep note had pealed out, a mighty note whose source was the myriad synchronized individual notes from the myriad domes around them. And the toad-men above had heard, too, and were rushing down the mound's side, only a score of yards from where the two crouched, down toward the domes from which arose that mighty warning note.

Boom!

With the last note there was a faint, sighing sound, a sudden increasing babel of whispering speech-sounds, and in the sides of the massed dark domes Warren glimpsed expanding circles opening, figures emerging. . . .

David, beside him, crawled suddenly upward, to the edge of the mound's summit, turned to whisper rapidly: "It's a chance! They're all off the summit, all gone down among the opening domes. And now——"

Without finishing he crawled up onto the flat summit itself, followed instantly by the airman; then they sprang to their feet, glanced for a moment over the broad, ruin-littered summit, and then were racing across it. For on it was no sign of the toad-men, for the moment, and a hundred yards away loomed the great cylinder from which the light-shaft soared—the great cylinder, and the switches on its side.

Speeding across the mound's summit toward the cylinder, Warren heard a mighty wave of clicking, whispering speech from all around, knew it to be the speech of the newly released thousands from the forest of acred domes around the mound. They were within a hundred feet of the cylinder, of the switches, were staggering on, on—and then both stopped dead in their tracks.

Ahead of them a dark figure had suddenly sprung from behind the cylinder itself, a *human* figure, the figure of a tall, black-browed man who raised a hand toward them in warning gesture, holding them with his mad, burning eyes. Warren heard, issuing from his lips, a clicking, sibilant cry, and then heard it answered by scores of cries from those below the mound, heard the sudden scramble of their feet as they raced up toward the summit in answer to that cry. Then David, beside him, had flung an arm out toward the man ahead in a gesture of infinite entreaty.

"Angus!" he cried, his voice ago-

nized. "For the love of God, Angus!"

The man before them answered only with another hissing cry, a cry echoed again by the hordes who rushed up the mound's sides toward his aid.

And then David shot him down. Warren heard the pistol crack, beside him, and saw the mad figure before them crumple to the ground, a spreading red stain on the breast of his shirt. Then he had leapt over and past that prostrate figure and was at the switches in the cylinder's side, was jamming the great red one frenziedly upward, just as the hordes of toad-men from below rushed up onto the mound's summit.

As the great switch clicked beneath his hands the mighty shaft of light above vanished, and at the same moment there vanished with it the flood of tropical heat about them, replaced instantly by the bitter polar cold, that searing, icy cold which the great heat-magnet alone had held at bay. And beneath that cold the toad-men on the summit were stumbling and falling, writhing and twisting and then lying still, the white of their bodies changing swiftly to black. Far out on the island and over all its surface was rising a confused babel of whispering cries and speech, that cut short and ceased as the mighty hordes from the domes fell beneath the icy sword of the arctic cold. The toad-men who had slept for ages had arisen from that sleep to be annihilated. The polar race had awakened at last—to death.

Warren turned, now, saw his companion kneeling beside the man on the ground, stepped to his side and with him gazed down into the face of the dying scientist. It was a face from which the madness had been suddenly wiped away, from which the man's wide eyes looked up at them uncomprehendingly.

"Why, Davie!" he said, staring up into his brother's face with infinite surprize and wonder; "why, Davie

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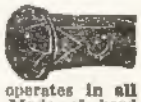

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lad!" and so stared, and choked and died.

6

DAWN was flinging its white brilliance across the island when Warren and David made ready at last to leave. In the interval they had buried the anthropologist's body in the fast-freezing earth, where it had fallen, and then had taken their way slowly down from the mound and across the island, across that desert of stupendous death where the hordes of the newly released toad-men lay black and stiff and dead, struck down by the polar cold. Now, after an examination which showed it to be comparatively uninjured, they were wheeling Warren's plane into position for a take-off on the long, level beach.

In a moment Warren was in the pilot's seat and his companion stepped toward the propeller, then paused, glancing away into the island where the mound and its great cylinder rose black against the sunrise. The airman saw now that his lips were working.

"That cylinder," McQuirk was whispering, "the domes, the secrets inside them—we gain all that, the world gains that. And we lose——"

He turned, abruptly, spun the propeller, once, twice, and then the motor had caught and was roaring its song of power. In a moment McQuirk was in the seat behind the airman and the plane was rolling down the long beach, slanting sharply up into the sunlight and speeding toward the south.

Moments they flashed on, and then, with a common impulse, the two turned and looked back. Far behind, now, lay the island, a dark-brown mass against the gray, berg-dotted sea. On its surface there seemed to glitter a myriad brilliant points of light, shining, dazzling. It was the light of the rising sun, glancing off the myriad domes of metal which had held for eons the menace and the power of the polar doom.

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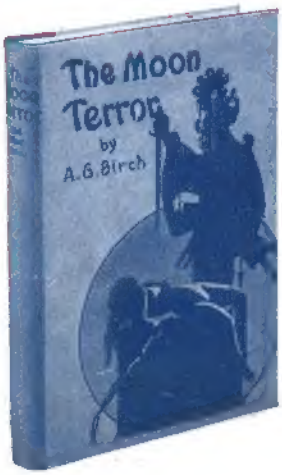

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